

THE RED HOUSE
BY THE ROCKIES.



A TALE OF RIEL'S REBELLION.
BY
ANNE MERCIER & VIOLET WATT.



RECEIVING BIG BEAR'S LETTER.

THE RED HOUSE BY THE ROCKIES.

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BY

ANNE MERCIER AND VIOLET WATT,

AUTHORS OF "A HOME IN THE NORTH-WEST."

"The very true beginning of *Wisdom* is the desire of discipline; and the care of discipline is love."—WISDOM vi. 17.

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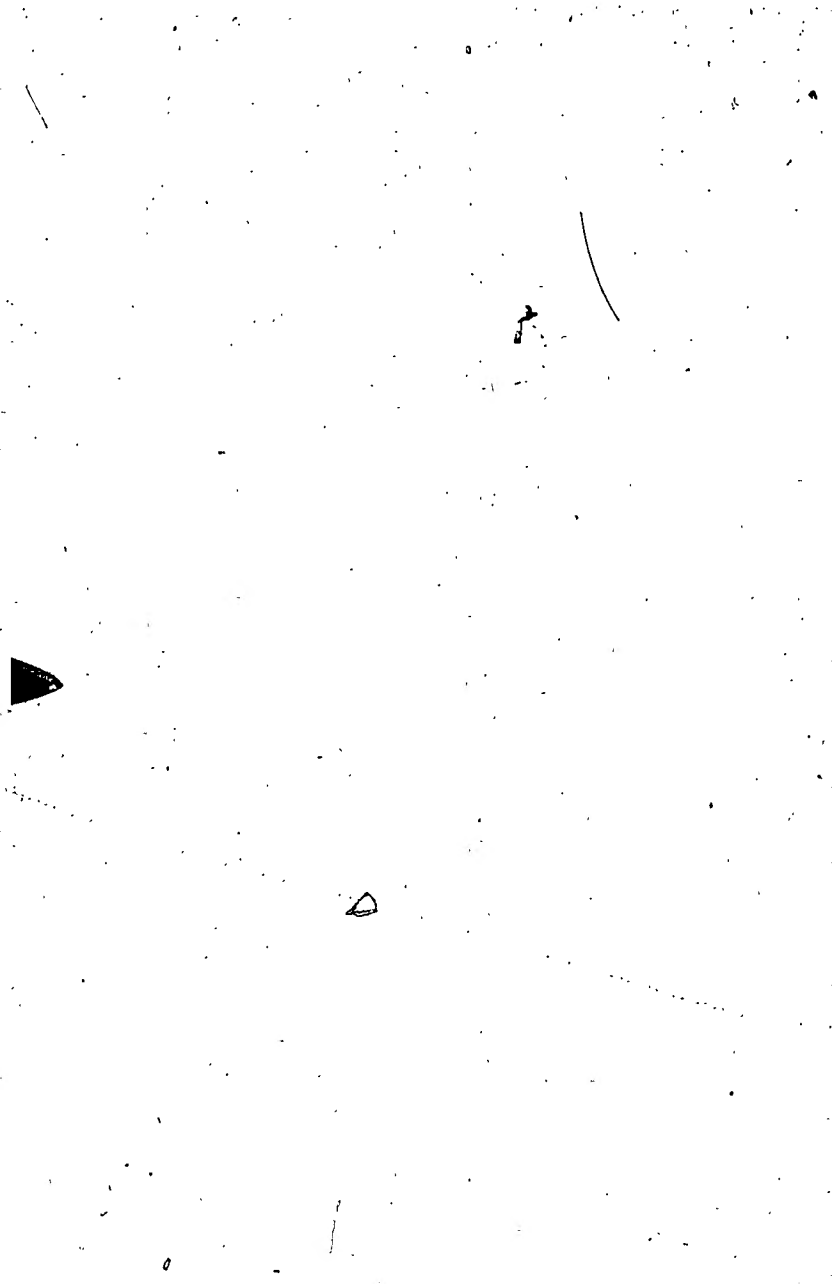
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TO
CHRISTABEL R. COLERIDGE,

A LITTLE MARK OF TRUE AFFECTION,

FROM HER OLD FRIENDS,

THE WRITERS.





PREFACE.

THE object of this little story is to tell the tale of the revolt of the Indians and half-breeds in 1885, under Louis Riel, with the aim of getting what the half-breeds held to be their rights in the distribution of Reserve lands by Government. The events are drawn from contemporary papers; and the facts of the struggle, so far as given here, are strictly true (though all the skirmishes are not mentioned),—with this exception, that the name of the worthy agent, Maclean, at Fort Pitt, is changed, and his family—a numerous one—are not all spoken of. But the valour and pious courage shown by him, his wife, and daughters, are matters of history. The son of Charles Dickens was, as here stated, the Inspector of Police at Fort Pitt at the time.

The letters and diaries here given are all genuine. Were it not so, they would detract from any interest the little tale may have as a mere narrative; and, being matters of fact, it seems best to insert them, since this page of history is one not open to many.

Those who desire to read more on the subject will find a full account of the two revolts under Riel in Major Boulton's "Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions" (Toronto: Grip Co.); and in Lord Wolseley's "Articles on the "Red River Expedition," in *Blackwood*, 1870, they will find an admirable *résumé* of the former of the two risings.

The story of the Red House and its inmates is fictitious, though founded on fact.

ANNE MERCIER.

KEMERTON,
July, 1896.





THE RED HOUSE BY THE ROCKIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE BROKEN BOOM.

"'Tis a bright summer morn, and the sunlight proud
Gleams on the water and sleeps on the cloud ;
Fitfully glimmers the woodpaths between,
And casts a broad glow on the shadowy green."

MITFORD.

"**H**ERE! hi! Phil, come quick! I can't do this myself, the water is rushing so, and it's a pity to miss these logs; they'll do for a cow-shed, or for a lean-to for our shack." *

The speaker—a slight, fair, young Englishman—was standing in the midst of a shallow but

* A *shack* is a rough cottage made of logs sawn in half.

fiercely rushing river, in the Calgary district, within view of the lovely, delicate outlines of the snow-covered Rocky Mountains. A violent flood was sending down hundreds of logs, which some unlucky lumberman had lost by the breaking of his *boom* higher up. A boom is a raft reaching across a river, to stop the logs which are cut and committed to the stream. The boom is placed at that point in the river where it may be convenient to land and use the logs: but if it breaks, the logs are swirled along, and are lost to the owner; and it becomes a stroke of good luck for any settler, further down the river, who can catch them, as was now being done by Phil Hart with the aid of his friend and partner, Jim Seaton.

A fine, tall fellow was Phil, and his dark, somewhat Jewish face, flushed with the exertion of hauling the heavy logs on to the bank, showed in singular contrast to the pale, delicate features of Seaton, who never looked hot, or tired, or excited. Nevertheless, he *felt* tired enough, and both were chilled with standing long in the water, so that it was a joyous response that went up from their lips to a loud shout which sounded presently from the bank. A burly, well-built man, with fair, curly hair, was riding at full speed towards them,

on a *casuse*, or Indian pony. A tin can and cup were hung over one arm; and when he had come up with his companions, and proceeded to pour out hot coffee from the corked can, a shout of "Tom, you *are* a brick!" went up heartily from both. Clad in their bright-coloured flannel shirts, their trousers turned up to the knee, they formed a picturesque group as they sat under a clump of maples beginning to assume the rich autumnal red. The sun flickered through the leaves on the impromptu picnic, as the coffee-can passed from hand to hand. Phil even began, in the lightness of his heart, to favour his companions with his one song—

"For it's my delight,
On a shiny night,
In the season of the year."

"Fo-o-or"—a prolonged roar on the upper F, in a rich though rough tenor—was suddenly cut short, and a deep crimson overspread Phil Hart's face and neck. The others looked at him with surprise, and, following the direction of his eyes, caught sight, on the path at the top of the bank, of a dainty female figure. It was a girl of some nineteen years, with rich brown hair and a clear, healthy complexion, and just now with a merry

smile parting her lips and showing the small white teeth. She wore a blue cotton dress ; and her hat, which she held in her hand, was full of autumn leaves. Jim and Phil both seemed embarrassed by their light attire, and made some rapid efforts to turn down their trousers ; Tom, however, shouted gaily—

"Well, Miss May, will you come and join our picnic?"

"Thank you," answered the girl, with a frank sisterly manner, coming lightly and quickly down the slope, using the fallen tree-trunks as steps. "I should like a cup of coffee very much, and I can add a slice of plain cake if you like." She had now reached them, and, opening a covered basket on her arm, showed a golden-brown cake.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom, and at once pulled out a big knife to cut it.

"You did not bring that good cake on purpose for us, though," said Phil.

"No, Mr. Hart. I made it for old Mother Barnlow, down yonder ; but we will eat it, and she shall have another to-morrow."

So they all sat on the logs or on the grass, and enjoyed cake and coffee, and laughed, and made

simple jokes, and Phil finished his song ; and then the girl got up, and said—

“ Well now, good-bye ; you are longing to get rid of me to catch some more of those logs, I know : here comes another set. That boom made a big break, I guess.”

Tom and Jim got up briskly, and with a hasty “ Good-bye,” ran down to the water to catch the new treasure that came floating down. But Phil waited a moment, took up May’s hat from the ground, and held it to her—taking, as he did so, a tiny spray of bright leaves from the mass, and not putting it back. If May saw the theft, she did not reprove it.

“ It was awfully good of you to give us that nice cake, May,” said Phil. “ And I am very sorry for the old woman who didn’t get it. Please tell her she shall have the next prairie chicken I shoot.”

“ Thank you,” said May ; “ that will make her a good dinner, and she shall have her cake all the same. Good-bye.” And away she ran, and left the forest gloomier, to one, at least, of the three lads.

It was not long since they had come to this new country, to try their luck at farming. They were all English. Phil’s father had died young, and,

about a year before, his mother had died too—his mother whose joy and pride he was. Home there was none for him any more, and, in despair, he got together his small means, and was thankful to turn his back on the desolate streets of the town where from childhood he had been happy. Jim Seaton was the fifth son of a clergyman, and Tom Purnell's father was a farmer, once well-to-do, but reduced to considerable straits by the recent depression in land. These three young fellows, being old schoolfellows, had joined forces, and put up a decent *shack*, or rough log-house, where they lived in a healthy, simple, comfortable bachelor fashion. They had about a thousand acres of land in common, and were busy fencing it in. They had a few horses and cattle, and some pigs and poultry. They did all their own farm work, and took it in turns to do the cooking and baking. This, however, none of them cared for, though all were good cooks. On Sunday, they did their washing; and the usual way was to tie all their linen in a sack, and sling it in a backwater of the river, and let the water filter through the sack till it was convenient for one of the "boys" to take out the linen, wring it, and hang it on the house-fence to dry. A frequent result of this proceeding

was that the pigs or calves would eat up all they could, and did not seem to find socks or collars bad for their digestion.

The three were honest, good-tempered fellows, Tom being the life of the party ; and there was many a merry evening spent in the shack : but no one knew how many a sad, home-sick hour each passed when his head was on his pillow, and the friendly dark hid the yearning in eyes which sleep refused to visit. It is not all "cakes and ale" for our boys in the Far West.





CHAPTER II.

THE RED HOUSE.

"In happy ignorance the children played ;
Alike unconscious, through their cloudless day,
Of what they had and had not."

ROGERS.

MAY DENT was the child of a Canadian who had married an English lady. Both had a little capital, and by industry and good luck—having no losses by fire, which are the ruin of so many in the Far West—they had made a comfortable home for their children. Mrs. Dent had, indeed, overtaxed her strength by the labours incumbent even on gently nurtured women in that wild country ; but May, the eldest girl, was a second mother to the little ones, of whom one—Carrie—was also old enough to be useful. The Dents' house was larger than common, and the logs were painted—white above, and the lower story of a charming

Indian red ; so it was known as the Red House. By much care, a neat garden had been cultivated ; and a few quick-growing trees surrounded the house, which was considered by the young settlers as a little paradise.

Mr. and Mrs. Dent were always ready to show kindness to young men of whose character they were sure ; but on this point they were very strict, and had found it necessary to wait awhile before admitting strangers to intimacy. Thus it happened that our friends Tom, Jim, and Phil, who had not been two years in the country, were as yet only on a formal footing in the Red House. Tom's lively and rather noisy manners did not quite suit Mrs. Dent. He was less of a "gentleman" than his two companions ; and although that would weigh little with persons of sense when once they were satisfied with his moral character, it made them the more cautious lest they should admit to their daughters' society a man whose manners were undesirable, and whose morals might be equally so.

May was the light of their eyes. Her pleasant voice, heard about the house, made music in her parents' ears. Without being pretty, she had that bright, healthy, honest look which attracts friendship, and her graceful figure never looked so well

as when she was engaged in active work. With her skirt tucked up, and a sun-bonnet on her head, feeding her chickens or chasing out a refractory calf that had strayed into the garden, May was like an embodiment of useful happy youth. She was not the romantic beauty who reclines in the depths of an easy-chair with a volume of poems or a novel. Truth to tell, May had little time for reading, and was not as fond of it as she might have been, and, but for the daily lessons to her sisters, she would hardly have kept up her own studies. The great want in May's character was an absence of vital religion. The habits of her family were right; they went to the distant church as often as they could, and the day always closed, if it did not begin, with family prayers. She knew her Bible, and tried in a simple honest way to live up to its precepts. But of the real deep love of Christ in the heart, of that zeal and trust which make us refer all things to our Master and our Guide, she as yet knew nothing.

On one bright morning she stood with her arms dipped in the billowy dough, making the weekly batch of bread. Carrie was busy with her mother upstairs. Little Annie, the youngest girl, a pet of six years old, was perched on a table, her well-shaped little legs dangling and kicking so merrily

that the red stockings made a dazzling gleam in the sunbeams which played upon them. On her lap was an open picture-book.

"Wasn't it kind of Mr. Jim to give me this book, May?" she said. "I call him a very civil young man."

May laughed. "You quaint child!" she said.

"And it is such a pretty book! It is all about fairies. Do you know about the fairies, May?"

"Not much, Annie; I never saw one."

"Neither did I. What darlings they must be, dressed in pale green, with stars on their foreheads! I asked old Jock what fairies were, and he said they were sperrits from unknown redgions, and he had seen the places where they danced when he was in England."

"You must not believe all Jock says," remarked May, turning the batch of dough with her strong white arms.

"No; he said fairies help to churn and bake in England, and I don't believe that. But if I saw a fairy, May, I should ask her to help me to learn my geography. 'Oh! I do *hate* geography.'"

"Well, Annie, I will dress you a fairy in pale green, with a star on its head, and you can set it up

before you when you learn geography, and see if it helps you."

"Will you, May? Thank you very much," said Annie, doubtfully. "But won't it be a *doll*? I want a sperrit from unknown redgions."

Annie sat with her chin in her two little hands, gazing thoughtfully at her sister, who was now placing the dough on the hearth to rise, still laughing at the child's quaint seriousness, when a sudden shrill call came down the stairs.

"May, May! Come quick!"

May rushed up to her mother's room, where she found her sister Carrie vainly trying to raise the head of that dear mother, who had fallen in a swoon on the floor.

"Oh, what is it, May?" she cried, herself as pale as the poor invalid. "Is she *dead*?" she murmured under her breath.

"No, no, darling; only fainting. Give me some water; or, first, a pillow to put under her head."

The two did all in their power, but it was a long time before Mrs. Dent's eyes opened, and even then it was clear that her mind was not yet collected enough to know what had happened, and her moans showed that she was in acute pain.

"What can we do?" said May. "Father has

gone into the town with Franky. There is no one to send for the doctor. I would saddle Dapple and go myself if there was any one to leave with you, to take care of poor mother."

At last the poor lady recovered sufficiently to smile on her girls.

"I have frightened you, dears," she said feebly. "I shall be better soon. It is years since I had such an attack."

"Do not talk, dear mother, but lean on me and try to move into the bed. You will be more comfortable," said May. And at last, by tender exertions, she succeeded in getting the invalid undressed and laid in bed, and persuaded her to take a little brandy and water. This revived her, and, hearing a voice in the kitchen, May ran down, and found that the lame widow Barnlow had come up for a dinner which she got every week from the hospitable Red House.

"Mrs. Barnlow," said May, "can you come up to my mother? She has fainted, and seems very ill. I never saw her like this. We never have real illness here. I don't know what to do. I cannot send Jock away now father is out; the place cannot be left without a man. I will go for the doctor if you will stay with mother."

Widow Barnlow hobbled up the stairs, and stood for a time quietly looking at the invalid. Though lame and old, she had good sense and experience. She went up to the bed, and said in a quiet everyday tone—

"Well, Mrs. Dent, I'm sorry to see you are but poorly. Have you been like this before?"

Mrs. Dent feebly opened her eyes, and answered: "Yes, once; before Annie was born."

"Do you know what is good for you to take?"

After a few seconds, the sick woman collected her thoughts, and said—

"May, look in my desk, in the little drawer. You will see a doctor's prescription. That did me good; if we could send to the town to get it."

May found the paper. "I am going, mother," she said quietly, "and Mrs. Barnlow will stay with you. Father is in town with Franky. I shall find him at the store, and we will come back together."

With a kiss, she left her mother, and went rapidly to prepare for her ride, Carrie having told the odd-man Jock to saddle Dapple, the quiet mare. The widow, meanwhile, began to prepare a hot fomentation and other simple remedies for the invalid, in a quiet capable manner.



CHAPTER III.

A RIVER IN FLOOD.

"Noble, the mountain-stream,
Bursting in grandeur from its vantage-ground."

BARTON.



LAD in her short serge riding-skirt and broad hat, the brave girl cantered on over the prairie. It was an endless vision of grass, of a greyish-green hue, with dashes of colour or of shadow here and there. Treeless, unbroken, it spread before her to the horizon, while the delicate outline of the Rockies was on her right. The prairie has the vastness of ocean, but the colour and the character are its own. The few trees that there were in the district were not visible; for they were on the river's banks, and the river ran in a deep fissure of the plain. It was for that May was making, for she had to cross the ford near the spot where she had met the young

settlers. Dapple was old, but willing and safe, and May urged her on; but not too fast, for it is poor economy to overtax an old steed. A dry sob escaped from time to time from May's overcharged heart, but she forced back the tears. It was now time to act, not to fret. She was accustomed to see her mother tired, pale, forced to rest, but not in pain or unconscious, and this sudden mysterious illness seemed to her the beginning of something terrible and unknown. What would home be without the dear kind mother?

She was approaching the ford. Already the land dipped a little towards the river, and the tree-tops began to show in the cleft. She urged Dapple on, she was anxious about the ford; some one had said the river was high. At last she was on the steep path which led down to the brink. She confusedly saw before her a cart, some figures, and heard voices, when, with a sudden shock, poor Dapple stumbled, tried to recover herself, in vain; down she went, and May, with a sharp cry, was thrown some paces away. For a few moments she was stunned; then she felt some one raise her head, and a voice say—

"Good Heavens, it is May Dent! Get some water in your hat, Phil."

As she opened her eyes they fell on the pale face of Jim Seaton, now full of grave anxiety and of something else, which she felt even in that moment. She hastily tried to sit up, and put back her waving hair, which had fallen over her forehead.

"Oh, thank you!" she said. "What is it? Did I fall? Oh! I must hurry on."

"Wait a minute, Miss May," answered Jim, gently, placing her against his knee while he knelt upon the other. "Some water will do you good; Phil is bringing it. You had a bad fall. Do you think you are hurt?"

"No, I think not; I can move all right, I think. But I am shaken. What a pity! I am in such a hurry to get medicine and the doctor for mother; she is ill."

Here Phil returned with a can of water; and very gently the two lads bathed May's face, and gave her water to drink. Had they been her brothers, they could not have been more kind and considerate. Presently she rose to her feet, but was so giddy, that she was forced to lean on a friendly arm.

"I feel sick," she said. "Oh dear! oh dear! and poor mother wants the medicine so badly. What shall I do!"

"Don't worry yourself, Miss May," said Jim. "We will manage it all. Wait till you are better; we shall not lose any time."

Meanwhile, Phil had examined poor old Dapple, and had discovered that she had stepped on a sharp stake, which had lamed her. There would be no more help in Dapple for some days to come. The young men conferred together in a low voice. Then Phil said,—

"Miss May, there are two things that can be done. If you think you can walk home, one of us will go with you, and the other will go on to the town, and get the doctor and the medicine. Or, if you cannot walk, we will take you on with us in our waggon, if you will come. We are on our way to the market."

"Thank you, you are very, very kind," said May. "I should like to go on and see the doctor. And my father and brother are there; I should like myself to tell my father, and bring him back."

"We will do all that, Miss May, believe me; we will do our best," said Phil. "Which is best for you? That is the question."

But May did not think so. "Let me go down the bank with you, and see the waggon," she said.

They went. The river-bed here was covered

with huge boulders, and it was evident that the river was swollen with recent rains up the country. It foamed and swirled around the stones.

"It is not fit for you to cross," said Jim. "We shall have hard work to get to the other side."

"Sit on these logs where you honoured us by sharing our coffee," said Phil. "I must go across with Jim; he may need a hand on the other bank. Then I will come back to you by the scow * below, as soon as possible, and take you home."

"Oh no! I cannot put you to all that trouble," answered May. "I can go home alone, if you really will be so good as to find my father and the doctor in the town. My father will be at Johnson's store."

"You cannot go home alone, shaken as you are, and leading poor lame Dapple," said Phil. "You must put up with my company, please, and rest here a few minutes."

Poor May was really more shaken than she liked to own, and, allowing herself to be guided by these friendly lads, she settled herself in a mossy nook among the logs with murmured thanks, and laid back her head on the wood as on a pillow, while Jim gathered up the reins. Phil mounted

* Ferry-raft.

into the waggon, taking his seat on the waggon-box, in which was the butter they were taking to the town; and, giving the horses their heads, Jim let them go down the short sharp slope, both boys hanging on like grim death, while the waggon went into the river-bed, rush, splash! bump, bump! among the boulders. The morning's adventures were not ended yet. No sooner had the horses entered the water than the young men found it so deep that they doubted being able to cross, and but for May's urgent errands would probably have turned back. As it was, however, they cheered on the horses, and Jim jumped on one to encourage it over. No good, however. Before they had gone many yards, the horses went on swimming with the wheels, and the waggon-box with Phil and the butter went floating down the river. May sprang up with a scream; but Phil waved his hand and smiled, to reassure her.

Jim reached the other bank with many exertions on the part of his strong and willing beasts, and then—though wet through—he raced along the bank, trying to keep up with Phil, whose position was really a sufficiently perilous one. The strong current drove on his improvised boat; and not far below, this river, the Elbow, joined a wider and

stronger one—the Bow,—where even an experienced swimmer would have a poor chance.

May knew and felt the danger. She stood with both hands pressed to her heart, watching with wide open eyes, fixed and horrified. The lads remembered the scow: that was their hope. But the half-breeds* who usually managed it were not always at their post, for traffic was rare. With all the force of their lungs, both shouted the usual call, as Jim ran and Phil went down the stream. At first, no one answered or appeared, and it seemed as if the scow was deserted. Jim would never be able to reach it in time to push it out and stop Phil's vessel, which was rapidly filling with water. May put her two hands to her mouth and gave a long shrill cry, which went well across the water, and—oh joy!—a voice replied with an answering shout, and the two half-breeds were seen, pushing out the raft. Phil had no power to direct his course, but, just as he came to the dangerous bend, where the river rushed on with fierce impulse to meet its fellow, out dashed the scow, and checked his course. Phil was clinging to the box, and one of the men on the raft caught hold of him, and pulled him on; while the box tilted up,

* Indians who have had a white parent.

and much of the contents was poured out into the water.

Jim—when his box was recovered and placed on the wheels again—was obliged to go into the half-breed's shack, to dry his clothes and get some hot tea, before proceeding on his way: but Phil, though as wet as a drowned rat, would not delay, but had himself put across in the scow at once to join May. He saw how agitated she was, and his whole thought was to calm her nerves by making a joke of the whole matter. Walking as quickly as May was capable of, they reached the Red House, to find Mrs. Dent somewhat better, though Widow Barnlow was still anxious and busy in devising means for her relief.

Philip stayed to do such "chores," or odd jobs, as the men of a household always do in the North-West; above all, he gave his best attention to poor Dapple, with old Jock's assistance. His wet clothes had dried upon him, and he would not attend to them at the Red House. He bade good-bye to May, with a fervent hope that her mother would soon be restored to health. "I know what it is to be anxious about a good mother," he said, with feeling: "and mind you send for me whenever I can be of any use, Miss May."



CHAPTER IV.

RUMOURS OF WAR.

"Yes: fierce looks thy nature, e'en hushed in repose—
In the depth of thy desert, regardless of foes."

WILSON.

HIM SEATON went on to the town in very low spirits. He would have liked to be the one to lead May home; but he had caught a look from her brown eyes cast on Phil which showed him where her thoughts were—a look which, in her usual merry mood, she would never have allowed to escape her, but which in weakness and anxiety she could not repress.

He went at once to find the doctor, who was out, ten miles away. Leaving an urgent message for him, he next found a chemist, and ordered the recipe to be made up, and then went in search of Mr. Dent, whom he found at last, and who—much

agitated by the account of his wife's sudden attack—at once prepared for his return.

"But, Seaton, my dear fellow," he said, "there is bad news about. They talk of a rising of the Indians."

"I thought there was some excitement on foot," said Jim. "People seem to be flourishing revolvers rather wildly, and one went off in front of my nose. Is there anything in it?"

"Well, they say there was a report last night that all the Indians under Louis Riel had turned loose on the town. The men loaded up their fire-arms, and went down to the railway bridge to hold it. After waiting there for hours, they decided it was a false alarm; but the women were half dead with fright, poor things—being left to defend themselves. So, to-day, all are preparing to go into the barracks, and let the North-West Police protect them."

Jim whistled. "I'm sorry for the news; I hoped all these rumours were over. I suppose, if it is true, we shall all have to go and lend a hand?"

"Yes, all young fellows like you," said Mr. Dent; "but a man like me, with a wife and children, must defend his house, and prepare for a siege. And my

poor wife ill too! I hope to God there is no truth in it."

"At any rate," said Jim, "I suppose we had better lay in some extra stores of food and coal oil, to be able to hold out in case the Red-skins pay us a visit."

Mr. Dent accepted the suggestion, and—in haste though he was to be at home—delayed his return long enough to get a few such necessities as Jim had mentioned, besides a good stock of ammunition. For, though the Indians generally remain quiet enough in their Reserve, or tract of land allotted to them by Government, bad blood breaks out from time to time, and a rising of the Indians is too awful a contingency to be regarded with indifference.

At last, the doctor was found; but, as his horse was tired, Mr. Dent persuaded him to come in his own waggon, and stay the night at the Red House. Little Frank Dent was fetched from the house of a friend, where he had spent a happy day with some other children, and the party started for home. But it was now well on in the evening, and, when they reached the river, the moon shone full on its waters. They crossed by the scow, and then took their way across the prairie, quiet and peaceful in the moonlight, the far-off Rockies beginning to

look pale and silvery. The stars seem more brilliant there than in England; and on the lonely prairie, with the wind sighing gently over the long grass, the Maker's presence seems very real, and, in the awful yet soothing calm, it is impossible to doubt that there must have been a Mighty Hand at work in the formation of things.

These feelings soothed the mind of Jim Seaton as he walked home alone beside his waggon. It had been a day of worry—losing half his butter in the river, and hearing the unpleasant rumours about the Indian rising. But now, as he looked at the bright stars, the thought of his home came over him, and of the quiet village where evening service would now be going on: his venerable father reading the prayers, his tender mother praying for him. "Do not wait to be rich, my boy, before coming home," she had said. Rich? There was not much chance of growing rich. Plenty of work and just enough to live on, and the chance of losing all by a fire: that is what boys get in the Far West. But he would plod on, and hope some day to return with a little money to start in another line near home. Dear father and mother! his thoughts flew to them under the calm moonlight, and then, on a sudden, there was his familiar

shack, and the opening of the door at the sound of his arrival, and Tom and Phil shouting cheerily to him on the threshold, with the warm lamplight behind them. Tom came and took the horses, and, after a comfortable wash, Jim sat down to a little feast: yeast bread, prairie chickens nicely roasted, evaporated apples and cream. Jim praised his chums for their cooking; the bread was not "caky" and the chickens were done to a turn. Then, after supper, Tom must needs wash up and do all the "chores;" as, he said, he had been the lazy one, and the others had been half drowned. Then pipes were lit, and they sat round the stove and talked, talked, talked.

The shack was a log building about twenty feet square, with a rough wooden floor, and a few planks on the roof covered with sods. The furniture was of a nondescript character: a wooden table, home made, on one side of the room; three sofa bedsteads, covered with gaudy rugs, ranged on the other; the stove standing out in the room with a wood-box behind it, and cooking utensils hanging over that. A large cupboard in one corner held their crockery; some chairs, shelves with books, and a few pictures and photographs on the walls completed the inventory. On the floor

lay bullock skins and skins of the coyote, or prairie wolf. One important item of the decorations has been forgotten ; namely, the weapons, and horns of various animals disposed on the walls. It was a rough, but cosy bachelor dwelling, and the three friends found plenty to talk of. The forebodings of a rising formed the leading subject.

"I shall offer my services as volunteer," said Tom ; "I can show them a good pair of arms. I suppose you will both do the same ; for as to holding this shack, if an attack was made, it's not to be thought of."

The others did not answer readily. They murmured something about helping their neighbours, and puffed lustily at their pipes.

Tom laughed. "Oh yes ! it will be far more comfortable at the Red House," he said ; "and they will want your help, no doubt. Don't let me prevent you ! Well, we shall hear something more to-morrow, no doubt."





CHAPTER V.

A HERO OF PEACE.

"Whose soul to clearer heights can climb
Above the shows of things,—
Cleaving the mortal bounds of time
On meditative wings,—
Malice can never mar his fame;
A heaven-crowned king is he;
His robe a pure, immortal aim,
His throne, eternity."

WAUGH.

MAY DENT had to pass a few days of deep anxiety. The doctor took an interest in her mother's case, and stayed two nights in the Red House; but he declared the case to be a mysterious one. He feared serious mischief, and strongly advised a journey to England, in the spring, for skilled surgical treatment. This, he said, might avert a fatal end.

Widow Barnlow was far too useful to be spared. She was installed as nurse, with Carrie to help her.

May was needed to manage the household, for which her active nature fitted her better than for a sick-chamber, where quiet Carrie was in her element. Still, May felt deeply depressed at her banishment from her mother's room, and went about looking so sad, that at last the widow ventured on a reproof.

"What are you a-thinking of, May, my dear," she said, "to go about with that cloud on your face? Don't you see you are making your father's sorrow double?"

"Oh, Mrs. Barnlow!" answered May, bursting into tears, "how can I be cheerful when dear mother is in such pain, and I can't see her but for a few minutes now and then?"

"My dear," said the good widow, "when I was a girl, which is a long while ago, my mother used to say we did no good by fretting over a trouble, but that if it pleased God to lay a burden on us, all we had to do was to ask Him for His staff to help us bear it."

"Oh! why should He lay it on us at all!" cried May. "Why should dear mother suffer so? She is so good and loving and kind to others. Why should she be punished?"

"Punished, May? Nay, that's a strange word for a Christian. Did you never hear that 'whom

the Lord loveth, He chasteneth'? Don't you know that trials sent by God are blessings in disguise? It's only sin that we can get no comfort from. And then, my dear, there is another way to look at it; and that is, that the Lord is giving you a lesson. You've had little enough of sorrow—and we all have to learn to do our part in trouble. Yours is to keep a bright face for your poor father, who has a deal more to bear than you, and no one but you to help him; for the others are too little. Think what a trouble it is to him to plan how to take your poor mother to England, and what to do with you all. And don't you see, too, how worried he is about the rebellion?"

"The rebellion?" cried May, looking up startled.

"No, I have heard nothing of that."

"Then Mr. Dent doesn't want to frighten you, I suppose: but it will have to be told soon any way. So, if you are a brave girl, you won't worry him any more by that sad face. Pray to the Lord to help you to keep your trouble to yourself."

"I will, I will," cried May.

"And excuse me being so free with you, Miss May."

May threw her arms round the old woman's neck, and gave her a good kiss and hug.

"I thank you for it," she said; "I am a weak, selfish girl, and, please God, father shan't find a dull face again."

Her eyes being now opened to something beyond her own trouble, May noticed with surprise how many strangers came to see her father, and that he took them aside, as if to talk with them secretly: an Indian agent, one of the local police, and others, besides Phil Hart, who—after an inquiry for her mother and a few sympathetic words to herself—seemed strangely anxious to see her father alone. She also noticed that, after such interviews, Mr. Dent seemed harassed in a different way from the anxiety about the mother. After a dinner with which she had taken far more pains than with any meal since her mother's illness, she lit her father's pipe, and begged him to sit down quietly and rest a bit.

"You look so troubled, dear father," she said: "is it all about mother? or is there any other worry? Do tell me. Can I not help you?"

Her father took the pipe, and deliberately puffed away at it for five minutes before replying. Many men find counsel in a pipe. May thought he would not take the trouble to answer her, and was beginning to feel hurt, when he suddenly said—

"Come here, May, and sit down. As your poor mother must not be disturbed, I should like to have a talk with you. I hope you are a sensible girl, and can control yourself when it is necessary."

Thus admonished, May drew near with a feeling of awe. What was going to happen?

"You know," continued her father, "that the Indians generally keep quiet enough in the Reserve, the land allotted to them by Government; but we must not suppose they feel friendly to us, who have turned them out of their land, and now keep them like animals in a pen."

"The Indians who come round here to sell things are friendly, father."

"Yes; those who make their business among the whites are so, or pretend to be so. But there is a fire smouldering in the remnant of the race, and, for my part, I do not wonder at it. Now, listen, May. It is reported that a rising is on foot among the Indians, under a fellow called Louis Riel. The fighting is likely to be some distance north, and, if all goes well, it won't touch us. But there is no saying what may happen. The rumour went so far, that all the men in the town turned out a few days ago to defend the bridge, because

it was reported the Indians were upon the place."

May had grown white, and looked up with a scared expression.

"But, father, surely the Indians are so weak now, there is no real danger?"

"It is always folly to despise an enemy," answered her father, "the horrors of the mutiny in India show us that. But there! no doubt this will pass off, and be a mere nothing," he added hastily, seeing her face of alarm; "only we must be prepared. Your dear mother's state makes me all the more anxious, and, in fact, I have invited our young friends, Jim Seaton and Philip Hart, to come here for a time, while Tom Purnell goes north, where the fighting is, as he has resolved to volunteer. Now, this will put more work on your shoulders; and how we are to keep your mother from anxiety, when she knows that strangers are in the house, I cannot tell."

May's colour had rapidly returned, and she answered briskly—

"That is a good idea, father; we shall feel safe enough with so many men about, and I do not mind the trouble of housekeeping. Trust me to find some way of explaining it to mother. And


please don't worry, father dear ; I will try to be a good, useful, sensible daughter."

She gave him a good hug, and went off to her work with a lighter heart than she had had for many a day.

That evening, as they were seated at supper, they heard a step approaching the door. Little Frank went to open it, and an old man of most benign and beautiful countenance came in, laid his hand on the boy's head, and said, in a sweet, deep voice—

"*Pax vobiscum !* Peace be to this house."

Every one started up, crying, "Father Louis! Come in, come in!" and one and all busied themselves to make the old man welcome. His dress told that he was a priest, and his pale thin face told a story of profound suffering; yet in his smile, in the deep peace which beamed from his eyes, one read that it was suffering overcome, and converted into a blessing. This Father Louis was respected by all, of whatever religion they might be, or even of no religion at all. He had, when on a mission to the Indians, been treated by them as an enemy, imprisoned, and tortured in ways too horrible to describe. God had helped him to bear all without a murmur, till his very



tormentors were overcome with admiration, and, like the persecutors of Paul and Barnabas at Malta, turned round and declared he was a divine being.* From that time he was all-powerful among the Indian tribes; he opened a school for them, and gave his whole life to the work of preaching the gospel to his tormentors.

Mr. Dent understood that Father Louis had come on some errand of peace; and after supper, which the old man enlivened by an innocent gaiety very winning to the children, he retired with the master of the house for a long talk.

May felt a great desire for a word with this good old man. It was long since she had seen any minister of the gospel. Her father and the whole family were members of the Church of England; but the nearest church was miles away, and it is not surprising that, in a new country, the old ties too often seem broken. The next morning she rose early, as she knew Father Louis always did; and she seized a moment to approach him, timidly, yet with a pathetic suggestive smile. He seemed to understand her at once; living with children of nature, his intuition had become remarkable.

"Daughter," he said, "you have sorrow and

* This sketch of Father Louis is from life.

sickness in the house. Are you converting them into blessings?"

She looked at him inquiringly. "A wise man has said, 'He who is much afflicted is not without refreshing comfort, for that he perceiveth very much benefit to accrue unto him by the enduring of his own cross; and the more the flesh is wasted by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace.'"^{*}

"No, Father," she said softly; "I have not learned the truth of this."

"Yet it is true, my daughter."

"You should know if it is true or not," she answered, looking at him with reverent admiration; for May loved courage above all things, and this gentle priest had given proof of bodily and mental courage in a high degree.

"If *your* cross has caused benefits to accrue to you, whose should not?" she added.

"I bless God daily for what I have had to bear among my poor Indian children, if that is what you mean, daughter," said the old man. "He would have a poor spirit indeed, who could not be thankful for those trials which have won him so much love as they give me, unworthy though I

^{*} "The Imitation," xii. 8.

am. But it is of you I want to speak now, May, my child. I have known you from your cradle, and your merry ways often cheered me, and I should wish to repay you by leading you to the fountain of life."

"I know I am not religious, Father; but, then, we live so far from a church," said May, blushing.

"It has been said, 'The nearer the church, the farther from God,'" replied the old man, smiling; "but it is true, at any rate, that the farther from church may be the nearer to God, if we make up for the lack of outward form by the sincerity of our inward belief. I am not here to preach a sermon, and we may not meet again; for troubles are upon us, and my poor children, the Indians, are giving trouble, and many of them may fall, and I among them. But remember my words, daughter, that only by trial will you learn true joy, and that you need trial to be made perfect. Take this little book, from which I quoted but now; it has been my companion for years, and the passages I have marked will be like my voice speaking to you when I am no more."

May took the book, "The Imitation of Jesus Christ," and, overcome by emotion, she bent low

before the old man, saying, "Give me a blessing, Father." He laid his hand on her head, with a few solemn words of blessing, in a voice broken by feeling. In an hour Father Louis was gone, and they saw his face no more in this life.





CHAPTER VI.

A FAREWELL.

"I,
Beyond all limit of what else i' the world,
Do love, prize, honour you."

SHAKESPEARE.



QUIET but busy winter passed; a winter ever remembered by May as marking the end of her peaceful, uneventful girlhood. Mrs. Dent still suffered, but it was likely to be a long illness; no further crisis appeared, and her patience was such that only the widow knew what her sufferings really were. There was much going to and fro between the Red House and the Shack. Tom Purnell was off to barracks at Toronto. The rebellion seemed looming, but did not come to a head. Folks called it a rebellion in memory of the greater troubles in 1876, under the Indian

chief known as Sitting Bull, when brave Custer lost his life in the fight of the Little Big Horn. That was the last Indian rebellion deserving the name; and the small struggles of a conquered race that have occurred since, in our Canadian Dominion, are only feeble risings, soon put down. Still they give trouble for a time, and are a proof of hatred, hatred deep and inextinguishable, in the Red people against the White race that are crushing them out of life. Sad that, with every merciful and just intent, such ruin still must needs mark the course of the civilized usurpers of native soil.

Phil and Jim brought over their goods, and fitted up a room for themselves over the stable of the Red House. Their faces made a point of interest at table: they were kind to the children; Phil was merry withal; and Jim, though quiet, had a store of knowledge which came out pleasantly in evening chats, when there was a spare half-hour after supper for whittling boats for Frank and Annie.

It was 1885, towards the end of March. The rigours of winter, which make peace perforce, were passing away, and it was the spring time, no "pretty ring time," but the time when "kings go

forth to battle." The trees were promising their new glory, and somehow May thought she had never seen the prairie so fair, nor felt the air so fresh; and no rosegays ever smelt so sweet as those which Phil Hart daily laid beside her plate.


It was one of those pretty posies which brought May's gay girlhood to an end. It was tea, the pleasantest meal in the day. The men had tidied themselves up a bit; the young men made themselves very smart now. There was something very good for tea, and May was glad that her cooking was relished. The lads were praising some new arrangements in their room—even Jim seemed excited about it; and they were inviting Mr. Dent and all his children to tea with them on the morrow. At this moment Annie happened to move something which had been accidentally laid over two bouquets, so that May had not yet seen them, though they were by her plate. One was of white flowers and one of blue. She liked blue best; Jim knew that: and so she took them up with an unmistakable look of delight, and Jim's face was radiant. But then, raising her eyes, she chanced to see Phil's glance resting sadly on the neglected white bunch; so boyish and simple were these young hearts, one could read them like

a book, with little worldly wisdom. May laid down the blue and took up the white, and fastened them at her collar.

"Such pretty flowers," she murmured. "How kind some people are! I like them both so much."

Philip choked with pleasure behind his tea-cup, while Jim turned white, and set his teeth; then, looking up, caught a grin on the face of old Jock, as he bent busily over his bacon at the lower end of the table. Jim muttered something obscure, but certainly uncomplimentary, and got up and left the house with surprising want of civility. May stared. Mr. Dent, behind a newspaper, took no notice.

The next day, May walked out when her work was done. She went to the corral, or enclosure where the cattle were kept, which she liked, because she loved the gentle eyes and sweet breath of the cattle, and also because there was a fine peep of the Rockies from it. There were no beasts in the corral now, but she leaned against the fence and let her eyes rest on the soft dream-like forms of the mountains, and her fingers played gently with the white flowers still in her bodice. A step close behind her made her start, and, looking up, she saw Jim Seaton, who came and leaned on the fence beside her.



"You like blue, Miss Dent," he said reproachfully. "I have heard you say so. Yet you threw my blue aside for white." His look dwelt meaningfully on the flowers.

May coloured, and answered rather confusedly: "Blue? The flowers? Oh no, Mr. Seaton; I did not throw yours aside: I put them in water."

"Yes, for every one to see," he answered, with an odd smile. "Well, I am afraid I was very ill-tempered yesterday. Will you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? Oh! Mr. Seaton, what for? I do not understand."

"Never mind, then," he answered more cheerfully. "One must make a fool of one's self sometimes. I came to talk to you a few minutes, because I want to make up my mind."

She looked up questioningly.

"Whether to follow Tom, or to stay here," he concluded.

"You are thinking of going to the war?" she said in a startled way. "I thought you would stay and help us if danger came."

"Danger will not come here. The poor wretches will be crushed far enough away. If I thought there was danger here, I would stay, and nothing

should move me. But there is no danger here, only temptation and trouble."

Whether May, girl though she was, scented another sort of danger, cannot be told; but she adroitly steered clear of the rocks by saying—

"Why do you wish to go to the war, Mr. Seaton? It is not *your* quarrel; you are an Englishman."

"And that is a reason for going wherever fighting is, is it not? So they say, at least. We must stand up for our kind and the country we make our own, and in this case we have an enemy worthy of powder and shot."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Louis Riel."

"Riel? My father seemed to speak of him scornfully; but he avoids the subject, because he thinks we shall be afraid, and frighten mother. He has only spoken of it once. I like to know things. Tell me who Riel is, and what the war is about."

"The war (or rather the rising, for it will not be big enough to call a war) is about the half-breeds, men of French and Indian mixed blood, who complained that Government was not fair to them in the allotment of land to the Indian tribes. And their leader, Riel, is the son of a brave old fellow,

a half-breed himself, a 'village Hampden' (you know the verse), who stood up nobly for his people in his day."

"Tell me about him. This interests me more than French history. It is the history of our own time and place."

"True; and how seldom we care for that sort of thing! Well, old Riel played an active part to ensure liberty to the half-breeds, who lived by hunting and the sale of skins. The Company* wanted to have a monopoly of that, and to oust the folk who had had the right for generations as sons of the soil. Once upon a time† a man was taken up for trading in skins on his own account. There was a trial; but when the whole scene was set, in came old Riel (this Louis' father, you know) with twenty armed men; and, by-and-by, while the counsel were arguing, he jumps up and shouts, 'The prisoner is acquitted!' There was a cheer fit to raise the roof, and no one dared oppose him, for there were only sixty soldiers in the whole dominion. So off walks Riel with his prisoner, and from that day to this there has been free-trade in skins for the half-breeds."

"Fine old fellow," said May, her eyes kindling.

* The Hudson's Bay Company.

"It reminds me of Cromwell in Parliament. 'Take away that bauble!' you know."

"Yes, he *was* a fine old fellow," continued Jim, dreamily. "And 'like father, like son,' as they say. This man is a chip of the old block."

"Tell me about him," said May, with sparkling eyes. She seemed lifted out of her everyday life into something larger and intensely exciting.

"I don't know much about him yet," said Jim. "When he was barely twenty-five, he headed a similar revolt in 1870; the one, you know, that was settled by Sir Garnet Wolseley's Red River Expedition. Never was anything better carried out than that expedition. Riel withdrew across the border on to American soil, and was legally warned to stay there."

"I believe he married a French half-caste lady, and has been living quietly as a trapper till lately, when his own folk called on him to help them in the grievance they complain of. I have here," he continued, drawing a newspaper cutting from his pocket-book, "the letter Louis Riel wrote in answer to that appeal. Would you like to hear it?"

"Oh! that I should. Do read it."

Seaton read as follows:—

"GENTLEMEN,

'You have travelled more than seven hundred miles, from the Saskatchewan country across the International line, to pay me a visit. Moreover, you invite me to go and stay amongst you, your hope being that I, for one, could help to better, in some respects, your condition; and cordial and pressing is your invitation. I am at liberty to excuse myself, and say no: yet you are waiting for me; so that I have only to get ready, and your letters of delegation assure me that a friendly welcome awaits me in the midst of those who sent you;—and I pray to God that my assistance may prove so successful to you as to render this event a blessing amongst the many blessings of this my fortieth year. Considering that my interests are identical with yours, I accept your very kind invitation, and will go and spend some months among you, in the hope that, by petitioning the Government, we will obtain the redress of all our grievances.' *

"Riel accompanied the delegation to the Saskatchewan. He takes his life in his hand, poor

* This letter, and those in the ensuing chapters, as also the fragment of diary in ch. ix., are genuine, and from contemporary documents.

fellow. He is sure to be crushed ; but he will have the honour of doing a brave deed before he falls. I call that the letter of a brave man and a patriot," said Jim, replacing the paper in his pocket-book.

"So do I," said May. "And you are going to volunteer against such a man ?" Her tone spoke reproach.

"Well, not exactly. I do *not* propose to volunteer, as Tom did. But if—if I go, I shall go on my own hook to one of the Company's agents, right in the thick of it. He is a Scotchman, McIntosh, and we, my people at home I mean, have known him from a boy. I think my father helped him on as a lad, and we have had nice letters from him, and skins and things. I shall just go to him and see how affairs look, and help him if he needs to defend himself and his family."

"And run away from us and our family ?"

"Don't reproach me, May. I don't want to go ; I long to stay. But I *can't* stay here when I see you don't care one bit for me."

May coloured hotly. "Nonsense, Mr. Seaton. I do care for you : you are always kind, and I like you very much."

"Do you like me well enough to marry me, May ?"

"Nonsense!" she cried again. "I am not thinking of such things. I have my poor mother to think of. Why do you bother me so? Is this a time to think of one's own affairs?"

"If it were only that"—began Jim.

But she turned away angrily. "I'm going in. You are very silly and wrong to talk to me like this, and I am only a wild back-woods girl, and your people are gentlefolks and would hate me, and—and—— No, I won't hear a word more. But look here," she suddenly said, turning round to him, and facing him bravely, though her cheeks were as rosy as if the setting-sun were shining on them, for this was her first declaration of love, and she wondered if she was acting as a girl in a book would act,—“look here, Jim Seaton; you are a real good fellow. There is no need for you to go to the war on my account. I don't want to have your blood on my head. But if you go, I wish you well, and I wish I were a man and could go too.”

She held out her hand impulsively, as frankly as a boy might have done, and he took it and pressed it with frank comradeship.

"And when you come back, I will dress your wounds for you," she said, smiling, and showing all

her bright pearly teeth. "Here is my prayer-book which I have been reading to-day. You shall have it if you like, and then sometimes you will remember that I like you very much—as a kind friend."

She walked rapidly away to the house with her fine free gait. Jim watched her sadly; and that was the last time he saw her alone before he started for the scene of the rising on the Saskatchewan River.





CHAPTER VII.

FORT PITT.

"You, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture : let us swear
That you are worth your breeding."

SHAKESPEARE.

FORT Pitt, on the North Saskatchewan River, though the building was old, was one of the chief centres of the Hudson's Bay Company. It formed a considerable group of wooden buildings : in the centre, a two-storeyed house inhabited by Mr. McIntosh, the agent, with his wife and two daughters. Two lower buildings jutted out like wings in front of this : that on the right was the Company's fur-store, held by the police, and rich indeed that store was ; the wing on the left was a provision store, also held by the police. Flanking these wings, at the

same height as they, viz. one story only, were two buildings running back : that on the left was a reception-house for strangers at need ; that on the right was occupied by the mounted police. These mounted police were hated of the souls of the Indians and half-breeds, and it was against them, rather than against the Company's agents, that the present rising was directed. They probably represented to the poor natives the brute force of the conquerors ; whereas, from the families of the Company's agents, many a friendly act had come towards the Indians, their squaws and papooses. Especially was this the case with the McIntosh family of Fort Pitt. Kind and just to all, they had won the friendship of the Indians ; and especially that of a certain redoubted chief, named Big Bear, whose force was now not far from Fort Pitt.

It was a calm and pleasant scene, not prognosticating civil war, on which the mixed light of lamp and stove shone on the evening of Good Friday, April 3, 1885. Without, the snow was falling thick and light. Mrs. McIntosh was busied with sewing ; her eldest daughter, Maggie, assisting her : while Jeanie, the younger, was preparing supper. The agent was smoking by the stove, in company

with Mr. Quinney, the Episcopal chaplain "located" at Onion Lake. A friendly Indian had brought him and his wife for safety to Fort Pitt. Mrs. Quinney, overcome with fatigue, had retired to her bed; and the two men were gravely discussing theological questions, in spite of the critical state of affairs around them. The inborn logical Scotch nature rejoiced in argument, and Mr. Quinney was an able yet calm antagonist. Uncertain though the fate of each day and hour, this worthy Scotch family, strong in practical faith, stayed tranquilly and contentedly in this dreary spot where their lot was cast, and lived out their daily lives as regularly and calmly as if they were protected by the British seas.

Suddenly sounds were heard as of some one hastily approaching, and a knock sounded on the door. Mr. McIntosh rose quietly to open it. His wife turned pale and raised her head, but the girls went on with their work. The elder of the two was a typical Scotch lassic, freckled, sandy, with high cheek-bones, and no charm but a look of honest sense and good nature. Jeanie, the younger, was golden haired, and very pretty; such a lass as Burns has immortalized in his "Mary."

Two men came in; one, a manly fellow in the

uniform of inspector of police ; the other, our friend Jim Seaton, covered with snow, and smiling a dazzled but contented smile at the warm quarters in which he found himself.

"It seems I bring you an old friend, Mr. McIntosh," said the inspector. "I found him lost in the snow, not fifty yards from our gate."

McIntosh, with Scottish caution, scanned the features of the youth narrowly, till Jim said—

"My name is Seaton, sir. You remember my father, the rector of Briarley."

"And well do I that," said McIntosh, gripping his hand heartily; while the wife and daughters came up with a hearty welcome. "He was aye a good friend to me. And what brings his son here at such a time as this? Not a good time for visitors to come, though there's ever a hearty welcome here for a Seaton."

"It's just the love of adventure that has brought me, Mr. McIntosh," answered Jim; "as it has brought so many to these parts. And I thought I would rather strike a blow side by side with a friend than with the volunteer corps."

"And you will do it sooner, too, most likely," answered the agent. "The volunteers will, maybe, arrive a day too late. Well, since adventure

does not seem to alarm you, we are glad to see you, my friend; and my wife and girls will try to make ye comfortable. Let me present you to the Rev. Mr. Quinney, who'll maybe know your honoured father by repute; and to Mr. Inspector Dickens, who will share our supper, I hope."

The young inspector accepted the invitation; and when Jim Seaton had taken off his snowy coat, and the party were seated at the table, with a good plain supper smoking on it, Jim said—

"Your name, Mr. Inspector, is a familiar one. Dickens—it is a welcome sound everywhere. May I ask if you are related to the novelist?"

"His son Frank, sir, at your service," answered the inspector with a smile.

"It is a great honour to meet his son," said Jim. "Your father's works were the chief amusement in our shack last winter. They never tire. Do you know Bret Harte's poem, 'Dickens in Camp'?"

"Yes," answered the Inspector. "My mother used to say that 'Spray of Western Pine' was one of the tributes she valued most, out of the many that were offered to my father's memory."

"It is very touching," said Jim; and he quoted some verses of that beautiful poem, beautiful

because of its simplicity and heart-felt admiration for the great author.

"Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting,
The river sang below,
The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting
Their minarets of snow.

"The roaring camp-fire, with rude humour, painted
The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form, that drooped and fainted
In the fierce race for wealth.

"Till one arose, and from his pack's scant treasure
A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure
To tell the tale anew.

"And then, while round them shadows gathered faster,
And as the firelight fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the master
Had writ of 'Little Nell.'

"The fir-trees, gathering closer in the shadows
Listened in every spray,
While the whole camp, with 'Nell,' on English meadows,
Wandered and lost their way.

"And so in mountain solitudes, o'ertaken
As by some spell divine,
Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken
From out the gusty pine."

Before the supper was ended, an interruption occurred. A low and peculiar knock was heard at the door, with something sudden and imperative about it. McIntosh, opening it, admitted a

half-breed, whom he addressed as Henry Quinn, and, after some murmured conversation, he said—

"Henry has brought news. Wife, we must have a little talk ; take the girls away."

Mrs. McIntosh folded up her work quickly and quietly, and signed to her girls to follow her. But, as she rose, she passed behind her husband, laid her hand gently but firmly on his arm, and said in a low voice—

"Let us know if there is danger, Davie. We are not children ; we are women, and can stand by you without any flinching."

"You shall know all I know as soon as anything is certain, Jessie," he answered.

The look which these homely people turned on each other was a revelation of two brave and noble souls, and it touched Jim Seaton. He thought, "This is what a woman can and should be ; a helpmeet for man in his troubles."

When the women were gone, the men gathered eagerly round Henry Quinn.

"What have you heard?" asked Inspector Dickens, for it was plain, from the excited look in the man's eyes, that there was important news. All gathered round him, and from his hasty half-caught words and the exclamations of the rest,

Jim gathered that there had been a brush between Riel's men and some of the mounted police, that an attack had been made on the settlement at Frog Lake, where blood had been shed and Riel had won the day. All the whites had been shot, Quinn alone escaping. Two priests were among those massacred, one of them being good old Father Louis. Emboldened by success, Quinn believed that the Indians under Big Bear were drawing near, and that this chief (with a considerable following of half-breeds and red-skins) was encamped just on the other side of the low hills which backed Fort Pitt. These hills were covered on their lower slopes with scrub, or short growth of oak; a track led over the hills behind the Fort, and down to the North Saskatchewan River (only a stone's throw in front of the Fort). A scow, or flat ferry boat, was on the river, moored to a post at the end of the track. Big Bear was swearing to have the scalps of all the police in Fort Pitt. Quinn said he was not angry with McIntosh nor Mr. Quinney, but with the police. He was coming to attack the fort unless the police were given up to him, and if resistance was made he would have the blood of every soul in the place. There was no time to lose, for Big Bear

and his men might be there any hour, any minute.

In breathless excitement, the spirit of war gaining on them all, the men discussed this account, and then hastily, almost silently, made preparations for defence. The Inspector called in his men; ordered two out on scout duty to see what the Indians were doing, and where they actually were. The rest aided to close the heavy shutters and barricade all defences.

"And your wife and daughters, what of them?" asked Jim, breathlessly, of McIntosh.

"They are in God's hands like the rest of us," answered the Scotchman, solemnly; "and they are brave. We shall all do our part. I will call them now, and tell them."

He opened the door leading to the upper floors, and called the mother and girls, who came, steadfast though pale, well aware that serious danger was on foot, but waiting patiently—and, doubtless, prayerfully—till it should seem good to the father to tell them everything. When they heard the state of affairs, and saw the preparations, Mrs. McIntosh said—

"Father, ask Mr. Quinney to pray with us, and then we will help you to load, and we will barricade the windows."

It was done. For five minutes, silence reigned in that little flock, but for the voice of the pastor, calm amid the danger ; and it was a fervent *Amen* that went up at the close of his petition, that the Lord, who died for them as on that day, would have them all in His good keeping, and especially spare the women from the impending horrors.

Thenceforward all was activity, ably directed by McIntosh, while the Inspector had his work to do in his own part of the Fort, and in strengthening the enclosure of palisading as well as might be. Jim was told off with one or two more to help the women in the upper floor. Then the shutters were barred and barricaded, loop-holes being rapidly made in the shutters so as to enable any one to present a musket, and to see what was passing outside. All now waited and watched till some sign should be given from without. The mother and a woman who assisted her, with two friendly squaws, meanwhile prepared some food, such as could be taken hastily at need ; placed blankets and spare mattresses and old linen handy for the wounded ; and, in fact, were thoughtful for every emergency, and as calm as in the quietest day.

Jim watched them with amazement, and felt

that only a strong faith, and a spirit inherited from Covenanter forefathers, could make this brave family so calmly ready to meet whatever ill might befall, and so powerful to influence those around them.

Inspector Dickens was in command, and a brave and bright commander he proved. The scouts came in, and reported some two hundred and fifty Indians encamped on the hills, the chief over them being Big Bear. All hands were kept at work that night, blocking up windows and making loopholes in all buildings. Double pickets were put on. At last Mr. McIntosh ordered his wife and daughters and Mrs. Quinney, who was in delicate health, to take rest; and, obedient to his order, they lay down and tried to sleep.

The men sat up smoking, a certain number being constantly on guard, and others on the watch, but they reported all quiet so far.

Jim Scaton drew near Henry Quinn, the half-breed, who had brought the sad news from Frog Lake. Jim had known Father Louis, and had heard May Dent speak of his goodness and gentleness, and it was with sorrow he had heard of the noble old man's death. He failed to understand how it had happened: for though

Father Louis had at one time undergone tortures from the Indians, his loving-kindness had conquered them ; for the one great merit in the Indian nature is that of gratitude, a virtue of which many white-skins seem utterly devoid.

"How was it, Quinn," he asked, "that the Indians killed Father Louis, who was so good to them, and had gathered so many of their children into schools?"

"It was all an error, sir," answered Quinn. "There was another priest at Frog Lake, whom the Indians did not love. They dragged him out, beat him publicly, and then tied him to a stake and prepared to shoot him, though he begged them to leave his hands free ; but when they would not, he just stood still, lifted his eyes to heaven, and went on praying in a low voice. Just then, poor old Father Louis, who was very ill and could hardly drag himself along, came stumbling forward, supporting himself on a stick, and moving wonderfully fast considering his weakness. He threw himself before the other priest, and held out his arms to the Indians, and cried in a weak but shrill voice, in the Indian's language : 'My children, hold your hands ; do not do this great sin. This is a priest of the good God ; do not call down vengeance

on your heads by shedding sacred blood.' He was too weak to stand, and he sank on his knees, still holding out his arms to them. I see his sweet old face now, sir, and his white hair waving. The priest at the stake (his name was Père Fargand) begged him to go back, and not put himself in danger. All this time—well, it was only a minute, but it seemed longer—the Indians were chattering, gesticulating, mad with rage yet not liking to kill their friend Father Louis. Then a gun went off; I don't know if it was in accident or in anger, and Father Louis fell backwards, with such a holy look—like St. Stephen, I think. There seemed a light on his face. The other priest seemed to be saying some words of blessing, when another shot carried off half his skull. Ugh! it sickens one; it is not war, it is murder. The Indians were savage when they saw Father Louis was dead; it seemed to make them mad. They knew it was a great sin, for he loved their people, and they felt sure his God would punish them, and so they seemed then ready for any evil, and all the other whites were shot at once. I can hardly say how it was, I got away. I have a friend among the Indians; perhaps he contrived it. At any rate, there was a moment when no one was watching me, and the way seemed

free, and—here I am. But God only knows what is to become of us all here. This old fort can't hold out three days, and we have women among us."

"We must do our part, and leave the rest to Providence," said Jim; and the thought flashed through his mind that, on this Good Friday night, at home, prayer would be specially put up in the dear old church for the absent son, in how dire peril the parents little knew.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUIET MIND.

“When friends depart, as part they must,
And love’s true joys decay,
That leave us like the summer’s dust
The whirlwind puffs away;
While life’s allotted time I brave,
Though left the last behind,
A prop and friend I still shall have,
If I’ve a quiet mind.”

CLARE;

SATURDAY, Easter Eve, April the 4th, was a quiet day outwardly, though all the little band at Fort Pitt were full of anxiety and even dread, which became worse as the valour and enthusiasm born of the emergency lay uncalled-for, and patience and self-control were the only requisite virtues. Watch was kept up vigilantly and incessantly, and defence-works were carried on. The women had also to

take turns in providing food and other creature comforts for the increased number of inmates of the Fort. This necessity for action and for useful, simple domestic work, no doubt helped them to control their fears. Very brave and kind they were ; under the guidance of the unselfish Scotchwoman, they all showed at their best.

About noon, a friendly Indian, named Johnnie Saskatchewan, came in with despatches. He came from Battleford, and reported the Indians down there turning loose, and several whites killed. The chief " Little Poplar " with a band of Indians, was twenty-five miles off, and coming in the direction of Fort Pitt. This was trying news ; for, with Big Bear just over the hills behind the Fort, and Little Poplar coming up to reinforce him, there was small hope that the garrison of the old wooden Fort could hold out against such a number, and there seemed no hope at all of the soldiery and volunteers arriving to their aid in time. Besides, there was the awful thought behind all, that the enemy were savages, and that their treatment of the conquered would be ghastly and horrible.

Jim Seaton lent a hand in all the hardest and roughest work of defence. He had sought excitement, danger, distraction from his own thoughts

and his own jealous pangs in seeing what he believed to be May Dent's preference for his friend Phil. And excitement and danger he had found, more perhaps than he had reckoned on. Not more than he liked for his own part, for Jim was a cool brave hand, and had to the full the Englishman's power of ignoring personal risk. But in this quiet Easter Eve, a day which his father always set apart as a time of sober reflection and prayer, he felt that he had perhaps done wrong by that good father in thus throwing away his life,—and for what? Because he could not bear to see a girl whom he loved preferring his friend to himself. Or was it something better after all? Was it a dread and horror of the mean vice of jealousy? Be it what it may, he had done the thing, and must bear the consequences.

He was sitting by the hearth during a short period of rest, leaning his head on his hand, and passing his early life in review on this, perhaps his last day. Looking up, he saw pretty Jeanie sitting opposite to him, preparing a great bowl of vegetables for the evening meal. She had come in so quietly that he had not noticed her.

"Miss McIntosh," he said, "you are very calm in the face of danger."

She smiled sweetly, pushing back her soft fluffy hair in a way she had.

"Mother told us, when we first came here," she answered, "that we must think our lives were given us from day to day, and that we should thank God for every night we sleep in peace. She said we are in His hands, and that we shall live as long as He needs our services. She told us, too, not to fear because there are Indians around us, for our father is beloved by the Indians; and if real harm were to threaten us, father would kill us himself before we should fall into the redskins' hands."

Jim Seaton shuddered at the thought, while the girl went on quietly with her occupation.

"You set us men a good example," he said.

"Oh, you are brave enough!" she replied. "What Englishman would shrink from danger? But we do not think much harm will come to us, only, we do fear for Inspector Dickens and his men. If they were away, there would be less risk for us all."

"But they will defend you?"

"They are not enough to defend us against Big Bear's men and Little Poplar's too. Well," she concluded, rising, as her task was done,

"things will be as they will, and it is no use doing more than our duty from hour to hour."

"There goes a woman as brave as she is pretty," thought Jim. Danger shared makes quick friends, and he already felt like a brother to these two Scotch lassies. But the glow in his heart was not for pretty Jeanie; it was for May, who would perhaps grieve a little for him if she heard he was killed.

Easter Day rose, snowy and gloomy. The men were on fatigue duty most of the day. Mr. Quinney held a short service in the barracks, which all attended; and perhaps men who had cared little for the great story of the Resurrection in quiet days, felt its reality now in this time of dread, more than they could have believed possible. Such are the uses of risk and danger: they open the shutters of our hearts so that the true light shines in.

The Indians were heard shouting during the night; shots were fired, and there was an alarm of a descent on the Fort. Maggie and Jeanie showed great courage, each standing at a loop-hole with her rifle; the men worked like horses, and were cheerful. All the civilians had been sworn in and armed.

So days went on. Whether the Indians overestimated the force in Fort Pitt, or whether their counsels were divided and they really desired more to frighten than to injure its defenders, cannot be told. Perhaps, desiring only to get what they held to be justice for their allies, the half-breeds, they felt that too much success, too much bloodshed and savagery, would injure instead of helping their cause. Bastions were put up at the Fort; but, this occupation over, time dragged on wearily, and the confinement and constant harassing excitement began to wear out the patience, health, and temper of the little band. Of them all, Mr. Quinney and Mrs. McIntosh were the most cheerful and even-tempered. It was to them all looked for the quiet right word at the right time. Maggie suffered most. She had caught a severe chill during some of her duties, and her pale face, drawn by agonies of neuralgia, was her mother's greatest trial; to spare her as much fatigue as possible was her mother's chief care. But Maggie would not be spared much. She said if she, her father's eldest daughter, did not share in all that took place, how could strangers be expected to do so.

Day by day relief was looked for—in vain. At

last, on April the 14th, a change took place. When Seaton awoke in the morning from a short and broken sleep, having been on the watch half the night, he wondered how many Englishmen or Englishwomen, awakening in safety to the sweet warmth of a spring morning, gave a thought to the peril of their countrymen in the North-West, where the stern climate vied with the foe to make the situation unendurable. He had written a long letter to his parents, describing the state of affairs, and owing to his true reason for joining McIntosh at Fort P. — namely, his hopeless love for May Dent — a love which he found to be stronger than he himself had any idea of, by the pain it gave him to see all her thoughts given to the handsome, dashing Philip Hart. Jim prayed the forgiveness of his parents for thus throwing away his life, as he had probably done: for few of the party expected to escape alive; all they prayed for was to escape mutilation and torture. And he told the dear old people that he felt, with remorse, it was at no call of duty that he had come to this place; such a call his father would be the first to bid him obey. It was from pure self-will. He blamed himself severely, but he felt that it was at least his duty now to obey the orders of McIntosh, and to do

all in his power to help the women. If he was to die, he would die as an Englishman should. The Inspector promised to send the letter with despatches.

Rations had been very short of late. There was little food left, yet the Indians gave no sign of attack. Their force was believed so greatly to overpower that within the Fort, that a sortie would be madness. All the inmates could hope was, to hold out till the regulars came to relieve them. Would they never come? It was the twelfth day of this torturing suspense, and there was no sign of them yet.

After the meagre breakfast, which left every one nearly as hungry as before, a council of war was held. Inspector Dickens announced his intention of sending out two of the police on scout duty; first, to discover the real force of the enemy, and, secondly, to see if there were any signs of a party coming to their relief. He selected two brave and trusty men, named Loasby and Cowan; and eventually Henry Quinn was added as a third, because from previous experience he knew local persons and places better than the other two. They went out, returning in about half an hour, with word that the Indians were in strong force over the pass

in the hills, only eight hundred yards above the Fort; two hundred and fifty being mounted and armed with guns, old and new. There were two white prisoners among them. The scouts had proceeded with great caution, and had escaped unobserved. Dickens and McIntosh debated gravely why so strong a force remained idle and merely threatening.

"It is for fear of English vengeance," said the Inspector.

"I hope and believe it is partly from a better motive," replied the agent. "My wife and I have always been kind to the Indians; this very Big Bear has received favours at our hands, and I believe he wants to threaten, not to hurt us, or perhaps at the most to hold us as hostages for the half-breeds' rights. The white prisoners they have now are preserved alive, you see."

Dickens did not appear to put much faith in Indian gratitude. He shook his head, but said little. The scouts were sent out again as far as Frog Lake to see if there were any signs of the red-coats.

Poor Maggie, whose sufferings increased daily, and whose strength seemed wasting away, was the cause of the greatest anxiety to her parents.

"Would to God," murmured her father, "that

relief would come before my child is utterly broken down."

He had hardly spoken when an Indian scout was seen coming down the track from the hill-pass behind the Fort. He flourished a white rag on the end of a stick, and was thus descried as a herald to propose conditions. The Inspector suspected treachery, and that the man was but a spy; but when he arrived, McIntosh received the missive which he carried, and gave him food (ill as they could spare it), which he ate greedily, but glaring fiercely on two police who stood guard over him while the letter was being read and answered. McIntosh's reason for feasting the man was to spread an idea among the Indians that the stores at the Fort were abundant and holding out well.

The letter, addressed to the agent, was read aloud to the Inspector and assembled civilians, and was as follows (the document was written by a white prisoner at the dictation of the old chief):—

"Above Fort Pitt, April 14, 1885.

"*To Mr. McIntosh.*

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"Since I have met you long ago, we have always been good friends, and you have from time to time given me things. That is the reason

why that I want to speak kindly to you, so please try to get off from Fort Pitt as soon as you can. For since the Canadian Government have had me to starve in this country, you sometimes gave me food. I do not forget the last time I visited Pitt, you gave me a good blanket; that is the reason that I want you all out without any bloodshed: we had a talk, I and my men, before we left camp, and we thought the way we are doing now the best. That is to let you off, if you would go; so try and get away before the afternoon, as the young men are all wild, and hard to keep in hand.

“(Signed) BIG BEAR.”

A silence of some minutes followed the reading of this letter, silence broken only by the Inspector saying sternly—

“Well?”

It was plain that opinion was strongly divided. “No surrender!” was clearly to be read in the young Inspector's brave stern face. But McIntosh, broken by grief for his child, and the clergyman, harassed by anxiety for his delicate wife, were not on a par with him, but were more heavily weighted. Seeing uncertainty on the agent's face, Dickens almost shouted—

"You are never thinking of giving yourself up to these red skunks to be scalped and killed? The regulars *must* be near at hand; my scouts will be in soon with news. We can hold out till they come if we keep together."

"Inspector Dickens," replied McIntosh, slowly and heavily, weighing every word as he uttered it. "You will say that loyalty to the English colours would force me to stay and hold the Fort with you. But I am a servant of the Company, and I am a husband and father. I may save the Company's stores better by a parley with this Chief, whom I hold to be honest and friendly; and, what is far more to me, I may save my children and my wife. I have no belief in the regulars coming in time. The redskins could overpower us, and burn the old Fort over our heads this very night. You and your men would fight bravely, and so should we all, I hope; but we cannot do impossibilities. It would be flying in the face of Providence."

The Inspector could scarcely listen to this harangue for impatience and anger. His men were not numerous enough to hold the Fort without the civilians, and he foresaw that, to avoid a massacre, he must fly before the red-skins. It

was a bitter pill to swallow. He repeated his conviction that relief was at hand ; but, at the end, old McIntosh rose, and simply said—

"I am going to tell Big Bear to meet me, three hundred yards above the house, at noon to-day."

The Inspector flung out of the room and went to the barracks, to vent his wrath, while McIntosh prepared his answer. He gave a letter to the Indian scout, who gravely received it and rode away.

The interview took place. Big Bear came down with six chosen braves, and McIntosh went up to meet him with an escort of six. All but the two principals remained at a respectful distance during the parley. It ended in assurances on the chief's part that no harm should be done to the civilians if they would give themselves up with the stores ; or even, as he said, after some opposition on the agent's part, with half the stores of furs laid up in the Fort. He wished to stipulate that the police should be given up ; but at this McIntosh showed such indignation that Big Bear began to get angry too, and it was only by putting great pressure on himself that the agent repressed a dangerous outbreak. At last he promised an answer by noon on the following day, and returned to Fort Pitt without being molested.



CHAPTER IX.

EVACUATION.

"Brethren of the West—my soul
Oft, to you, will westward wing,
When some hymn ascendeth whole
At the hour of offering;
Thinking how 'twill onward roll
Till your voice the same shall sing;
Uttered o'er and o'er again,
Till ye give the last 'Amen.'"

C. COXE.

THAT night, there was little sleep at Fort Pitt. The police, having ragged themselves hoarse against the indignity of yielding to the red-skins after all the preparations made to resist them, snatched rest in detachments; but the civilians were hardly cool enough for even this. The Indians were far more demonstrative than they had been hitherto.

Fires were lighted on the hill-slope above the Fort, and the war-dance, with its atrocious whoops, was going on most of the time. The women began to lose their nerve, though poor Maggie was becoming dense to all outside impressions—the state of her health was evidently very serious.

The next morning Inspector Dickens made a final attempt to dissuade McIntosh from surrender, but in vain; and, according to an arrangement he had made with Big Bear, the agent again left the Fort about noon. His wife, brave as she had been till now, clung to him in tears, and did not give way till he said seriously—

"Let me go, dear; you unnerve me: and I must follow my own judgment, come what may."

Then she loosed him, and saw him go, with a solemn, "God bless you, my ain-man, Davie."

All now kept up an anxious watch for the two men who had been sent out on scout duty. Would they bring word that the regulars were coming to the relief of the little party in the Fort? At last Mr. Quinney and Jim, each from his loop-hole, cried at one moment, "There they are!" Yes, there were two of them; Henry Quinn had not returned, but Loasby and Cowan were seen swiftly but cautiously advancing, keeping as much

as possible behind trees or scrub. In vain. The Indians had caught sight of them. With a horrid shout, a party of young braves rushed upon the two men. There was a struggle, an indistinguishable mass of human beings. Jim fired, and shots came from the barracks also, showing that the police had seen what was happening. An Indian fell, but the scouts were overpowered by numbers, and the braves withdrew after a few minutes, like satiated beasts of prey, carrying their wounded man, but leaving Loasby and Cowan on the field. Inspector Dickens burst into the civilians' rooms shouting—

"Is any one for the rescue party?"

"I am!" cried Jim; and with his rifle over his shoulder he rushed out after Dickens and four picked men, to fetch back their poor comrades.

The Indians made some show of following, but in the end no serious opposition was made to the little party. They found poor Cowan quite dead, his scalp gone as a trophy to the Indians. Loasby was not mutilated, though badly wounded and stunned by a blow from a tomahawk. Probably the shot which had done execution among them had dispersed the band before more harm was done. Poor Loasby was lifted tenderly, and carried

into the Fort, under a scattered fire, which, however, did no damage. Cowan's body was also brought in for burial.

It may be well imagined that this tragic incident increased the alarm of the women; and their anxiety was at a painful height when a messenger with the white flag brought a letter from Mr. McIntosh to his wife.

He wrote from "Top of the Hill, Fort Pitt," at two p.m., and owned that he had been too confiding. He had ventured into the enemy's camp, and the Indians, excited by the skirmish with the scouts—who, they declared, had fired first—and with the loss of their own man, had taken the agent prisoner, and now dictated their terms; namely, that the police should evacuate and the civilians all come into the Indian camp, and half the stores of fur at the Fort should be theirs.

"They have made me swear by Almighty God that I would stay with them," he continued. "Alas! that I came into camp at all, for God only knows how things will go now. They want you and the children to come into camp, and it may be for the best that you should, for Heaven only knows how this will end. If the police-force

in the Fort cannot get off, the Indians are sure to attack it to-night, and will burn it down. For the time being, we might be safe with the Indians ; but hereafter it is hard to say, for provisions will be scarce after a time, and we may suffer in that way. I will write you again after I hear what Mr. Dickens says about allowing you all to come out. I believe candidly it is best you should come, as the Indians are determined to burn the Fort if the police do not leave. They have brought coal-oil with them for that purpose, and I fear they will succeed in setting the place on fire. Beyond a doubt the Indians promise that, after you all come out, they will go off and give the police time to get away before they come to see the Fort again. The Indians wish you to bring all your things at once. May God bless and guide you for the best.

"D. MCINTOSH."

When Mrs. McIntosh had read this letter, she summoned Inspector Dickens to read it too, and to give his opinion. Having perused it silently, he sent for all his men, and when they, with the civilians, were assembled in the biggest room of the Fort, he said—

"Mrs. McIntosh, I thank you for handing me this letter, which I will now read to my men." He did so. "I fear we must now give up all hope of relief from without. Poor Loasby says they saw nothing of the red-coats, and Heaven knows we can do little against two hundred and fifty armed Indians around us, and a lot more over the hill. I cannot refuse permission to you, madam, and the civilians to go to the camp, if you trust the chief's promises; and as for us, my men, it seems to me the only chance of saving our lives is to get away, little as we like the thought of turning tail. Our danger is less than that of the women, and we can protect ourselves; so all I can say is, we are willing to stay and defend the Fort if the ladies prefer to stay in it; but if they go, we go too. Mrs. McIntosh and Mrs. Quinney, we are at your service, and we leave the choice in your hands."

A short discussion was all that was needed before Mrs. McIntosh replied—

"We thank you very sincerely, Mr. Dickens, for offering to protect us at the risk of your lives. But we will not tempt Providence. We will go to my husband and trust the word of the chief, and may God take care of us all."

She was her own brave self again. Her hard Scotch features were illumined with a heroic light, and the gentler face of Mrs. Quinney beside her had no less firm an expression. Word was sent to the Indian camp that all the civilians would come at once. Each went to prepare hastily a few necessaries and valuables, and then, with a hearty hand-grip and eyes not unwet with tears, the women said farewell to their protectors; Jim, Mr. Quinney, and one or two servants accompanying them to the Indian camp. Poor Maggie was hardly in a state to bear the exertion; but any chance was better than the risk of fire and an Indian raid, when no mercy would be shown.

The police, meanwhile, prepared hastily to bury their comrade Cowan, and to transport the wounded man on a litter to the river.

It may be interesting here to add some fragments from the diary of one of the police force.

"April 15th.—The Hudson's Bay employées gave themselves up to Big Bear. Impossible to hold the fort now, so we had to gracefully retire across the river in the scow, and camped for the night, not forgetting to bring the colours along. Nearly swamped crossing the river, as it was rough, and the scow leaked badly. A general idea prevailed

that we should be attacked going down the river. Thus ended the siege of Fort Pitt.

"*April 16th.*—Up at 4.30, after passing a wretched night; snowing fast and very windy. Moving slow. Several men frost-bitten. Clothing froze on our backs. Much ice running.

"*April 19th (Sunday).*—Left Slap Jack Island at 7.13 a.m.; ran for five hours. Camped on Beaver Island. Ran on three hours, and camped on Pine Island for the night.

"*April 20th.*—Here all day; barricaded the scow. Inspected arms. Rough-looking parade. Wounded man better.

"*April 21st.*—Left the island at 7 a.m. Hailed an interpreter and two policemen on the south bank. They had despatches for us. They reported Battleford safe, and troops expected daily.

"*April 22nd.*—Started at 5.45 a.m., and reached Battleford at 9 a.m. The garrison turned out and presented arms; the police band played us into the fort. Enthusiastic greeting. The ladies gave us a grand dinner."

So ends the diary, and Dickens and his brave men were safe in Battleford, though they would rather have struck a blow first. They found the greater part of the town in ruins from the attack

under the chief of the Cree Indians, known as Poundmaker; schools, stores, offices, private houses looted and wrecked; the road for acres round strewn with broken furniture and valuable articles of bric-à-brac, which the Indians had taken from mere love of destruction, or from spite, from the house of the judge.

And what about the prisoners, for prisoners the civilians now were? They came forth in sad array; their goods on some of the horses left behind by the police. And the women, also, were on horseback; for it seemed to the men they would thus be more safe from annoyance or insult, should such be offered. Poor Maggie could hardly hold up her head, and her mother and Jeanie watched her every movement with grave anxiety. No molestation was offered, however, by the band of Indians who escorted them—a dismal procession—up the low hill, and across the gap, or pass, to the camp of Big Bear.

Here, at the opening of the chief's tent, McIntosh was standing. His face was drawn and pale, and he went forward to receive his wife and daughters with a sad look. With him, by the same tent, stood two other men—the chief, Big Bear, himself, in full war paint, and another in ordinary civilized

garb, who was unknown to any of the party by sight, but whom Jim and the clergyman at once guessed to be Louis Riel, even before the prisoners were presented to him by that name.

As McIntosh came forward with quivering lips to receive his wife and children, Big Bear himself stepped up to Maggie, who was being lifted from her horse, and said, with quite a fatherly kindness:—

“I receive my little white sister with the hands of my heart. My sister is sick. Squaw will serve her like a mother.”

Maggie looked up to his weirdly-painted face with a sweet wan smile, and was led to a tent hard by with the other females. One or two Indian squaws received them kindly.

Big Bear was a tall and rather fine-looking man with prominent teeth. His black hair hung down on either side of his face in two long plaits, and stood up in a bush above his forehead, decorated with a few upright feathers. He wore a striped blanket, beneath which the mocassins appeared. His neck was loaded with chains of beads, and there were rings on his long bony fingers.

Louis Riel was a man of thirty-nine, six feet high, with full sandy whiskers and moustache. His eyes were grey and very penetrating, though

when speaking he had a habit of half closing them. His hair was long, light brown, and curly, giving the head a bushy appearance. His only insignia of office was a small medal with a French inscription. He came forward with a pleasant smile, and the impression he made on Jim was that he was an honest and true man, and an enthusiast. He spoke in a friendly manner to all the prisoners, assuring them they should fare as well as he did, and that it rested with the Government to end the whole difficulty by doing justice to those for whose cause he was fighting. To Mr. Quinney, as a clergyman, he spoke with respect bordering on reverence, and seemed anxious to assure him of the excellence of his own motives.

"As a minister of the gospel, reverend sir," he said, "you must feel with me in hating injustice. I do not fight for myself. I have a happy home, simple, but sufficient for my needs; and I have left my wife and children at the call of the oppressed half-breeds. My father fought for others, and so do I. Perhaps I may never see that home again, and, whatever happens, I desire no more than to go back to it in peace. But I cannot see oppression and injustice without trying to remedy them."

Mr. Quinney answered him with respect and sympathy, and seemed interested in his conversation. But to Jim the chief interest lay in the hundreds of Indians, with their long, solemn, yellow faces and weird costume, drawn up in array to receive their prisoners with pride and a certain dignity. It was not a pleasant position for the white people, and their hearts sank within them as they wondered what and when would be the end of it.





CHAPTER X.

GOOD COUNSEL.

"An' O ! be sure to fear the Lord alway ;
An' mind your *duty*, duly, morn. an' night !
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might :
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright."

BURNS.

IT was May. The fresh and sudden beauty of the Canadian spring was making the earth glorious. The prairie was spangled with a thousand flowers, and the air was a joy to breathe. The Red House, with its homely cheerful life, was awakening to activity after the comparative rest of winter. The fear of attack was almost over. The regulars, though behindhand on almost every occasion, had at last met the Redskins, and, at Batoche, General Middleton had defeated the united Indians and half-breeds.

So much was known; but news was uncertain and irregular.

The afternoon sun was streaming into the dwelling-room through the branches of a great bunch of verdure, which May had set in the window in a big brown Indian pitcher. Mrs. Dent, white, but contented-looking, was leaning back in the great rocking-chair, busily knitting. Through an open door, the widow and Carrie were seen making cake for tea. The table in the dwelling-room was covered with ribbons, lace, pins, and scissors, and May was busily trimming three hats for herself and her sisters; while Annie, in her favourite attitude on the table, was trying to make a small doll stand upright. The doll was dressed in green muslin, and had a pair of wings and a wand, and was evidently the "fairy" she had so ardently desired.

"If Kedijah will only stand up well in front of you and wave her wand, she will help you very much, May," said the little girl solemnly, "and you will do the hats much better."

"Bother these bows, they *won't* go right!" said May, rather pettishly, pulling out pin after pin.

"Oh, May! don't be so cross. They are very nice bows. We shall all look so nice at the

bazaar. Won't it be fun! Phil says he will put into the penny dip six times for me."

May was silent for a few minutes, sticking in the pins with a defiant air. At last she said—

"I don't think I will go to the bazaar."

"Oh, May!" cried Annie, half in tears, "how can you say so, when you know we think of it all day and dream of it all night? There is so little fun here. And Mr. Phil won't take us if you don't go."

May got very red. "It seems cruel to go pleasuring when we don't know what has become of one's friends among the Indians," she said, with a very sad tone in her voice.

"But keeping us away from the bazaar won't make it a bit better for them. Oh, May, dear May, don't say you won't go."

She jumped off the table, and ran up to her sister, putting her little arms round May's neck, and tears stood in the pretty blue eyes. May softened and smiled, but it was a sad smile; and she said, kissing the little girl—

"There, Annie dear, go and sit down. I will go: but one cannot be very happy when there is so much sorrow, can one, mother?"

"All joy in this world is mixed with sorrow,

dear ; , our own, or others'," said the mother. "I think it is best to take a little innocent pleasure when we can, if no one else is the loser by our doing so."

"Dear little mother!" cried Annie, gleefully, transferring her caresses to Mrs. Dent, and going on to chatter about the coming delights of a bazaar for the enlargement of the hospital in the town.

May went on with her work, but her cheeks were paler than of old, and a shade seemed upon her features. A change had come over her which surprised all her friends, and herself as much as any one. It was natural to be thoughtful, and even anxious when friends were fighting to protect the peaceful homesteads that were sprinkled over the prairie-land, and on which ruin might come if those friends should fail. But failure was not likely, and why should a girl be sad and lose her colour and her sleep because of the unknown hundreds who were fighting the Redskins? News had been uncertain, and nothing definite was known as to the fate of Tom or Jim ; not much, even, of what was going on.

Phil, the merry and active, did his best to make things cheery ; but his efforts had failed signally

with May, in a way that even surprised himself. Without being too self-confident, he had flattered himself that the girl liked him well enough. He fancied she cared for him, and that he himself was sufficiently in love with her, and he meant to speak out his mind as soon as a favourable opportunity should present itself. But somehow the opportunity did not appear. Was it chance, or did May avoid him? and, if so, why?

A few minutes later, an opportunity was given to him of testing the question. When he entered the room he found May alone; her pretty ribbons had dropped from her hands, which were clasped over her face. As he came in she hurriedly removed them, and went on working; but there was a tell-tale redness in her eyes and pallor in her cheeks. It moved him deeply. He sat down beside her, and, looking anxiously in her face, said—

“May, dear, what is the matter?”

He had never addressed her thus, and was hardly conscious of doing so now; nor did she seem to notice it.

“Oh, nothing, nothing!” she said, hurriedly.

“You are nervous, and not well. I am sure you are not well. You need change of thought. It is

so kind of you to let me drive you to the bazaar to-morrow. It will do you good."

"Oh, Phil, I *can't* enjoy myself while our friends are in such danger! How can I? It would be heartless."

"No, no; not heartless. They will come back safe and sound, and covered with glory. You are too tender-hearted."

He tried to take her hand with a caressing gesture; but she pulled it from him, rising abruptly, and sweeping up all the smart trimmings to make way for the meal which was being prepared. As she moved away she passed her hand over her eyes with a half-angry gesture, as if vexed at her own emotion, while Phil looked after her, puzzled and sorry.

That evening's news justified her, however; for her father came in shortly with a paper he had just received, and with a very sad look on his face.

"Our poor friend Tom is gone," he said, pointing to a list.

The battle of Batoche had taken place, and there, among the "killed," stood the name of Thomas Purnell.

There was a universal cry of regret for the fine manly fellow, gone in all the vigour of youth.

In anxiety lest Mrs. Dent should suffer from the shock, no one noticed May; and, at last, Carrie said—

"And is there no news of Jim?"

"Not by name," answered her father; "but Fort Pitt, where he meant to go, is evacuated. The police cleared out by the agent's orders, to avoid bloodshed. The civilians are in the hands of the Indians. If Jim was there, he is now a prisoner to Big Bear."

"And the Indians kill—and—and mutilate their prisoners," said a strange, deep voice, full of passion, from a dark corner behind the mother's chair. It was May's voice, but it did not sound like hers.

"No, no," said Phil, earnestly and kindly, while a queer look, like a flash of enlightenment, passed over his face; "these are friendly Indians. They promised protection if the civilians evacuated. The prisoners will only have the same risks as the Indians themselves,—the chances of cold and exposure."

May gave him a look of gratitude, and hurriedly left the room.

That night, when her sisters were sleeping, she softly called in the good widow as she passed the

door of May's room. She drew her to sit beside her on her spare little bed, laid her head on the old woman's shoulder, and sobbed in deep, low, repressed sobs—

"Oh, I am so unhappy!" she said.

The widow, who had known trouble in many forms, and had daughters of her own, soothed her gently, hushing her like a child; and, when she was quieter, said—

"And what is all this for, dearie? Who is it you care for? Is it not Phil?"

May shook her head.

"Not poor Tom? You never cared for him?"

"No, no," whispered May. "I was a silly, wicked girl. I mistook my own heart. Poor Jim liked me so, and went to the war because of me. I never knew I cared for him till he was gone. And now he is in awful risk, and it is all my fault."

There was no consolation to be given. The widow continued gently to soothe and hush the girl, and at last she said—

"There is only one thing you can do for him, May. You can pray."

"Yes, I know; and I *have* prayed, daily, daily."

"Then perhaps it is your prayers that kept the

Fort safe. Don't doubt nor fear, but go on and tell your Father in heaven all your trouble, and lay your love in His hands, and just trust Him. This will make a woman of you. Sorrow and prayer is what makes our souls grow, as rain and sun make the plants shoot upwards."

"You need more help than you get here, May," she added after a while. "You need a house of prayer, and the teaching of a good minister. When the war is over, you must ask your mother to let you go to the town for a bit, where you can go to church, and hear the clergyman preach, and take the Lord's Supper. That is what you want. But here there is nothing of that sort—no human help; but there is the Lord Himself, and He will be Priest and Comforter to you in your need. Only trust Him."

As she spoke, she laid the poor girl in her bed, and tucked her up like a little child, and kissed her cheek as she laid it, all tear-washed, on the pillow.





CHAPTER XI.

LESSONS OF SORROW.

"Rise from the feast of sorrow, lady,
Where all day long you sit between
Joy and woe, and whisper each."

TENNYSON.

RUEL was a prisoner, and the rebellion was quelled. Matters had gone thus after the evacuation of Fort Pitt:—A Government mission, under Mr. Royal, M.P., had been sent to the half-breeds to try to settle affairs peaceably. Several small engagements had taken place between the Indians and the Toronto troops, who reached Winnipeg on April 7th; but the first which could fairly be called a battle was that at Batoche*—May 9th, 10th, 11th. This engagement was the second between

* Batoche lies about 170 miles north-west of Qu'Appelle, and 130 south-east of Fort Pitt.

the First Flying Column under General Middleton, and the half-breeds and Indians under a leader named Gabriel Dumont. It was the most serious encounter since the beginning of the campaign, as Batoche was the stronghold of the rebels. On May 9th General Middleton received a message from Riel, saying, "If you massacre our women and children, we will massacre ~~your~~ prisoners." Middleton answered, "Put your women in a safe place, point it out, and we will not fire at it." He then pushed on the advance guard, and, when he saw a chance, ordered a general advance. His men responded nobly, and were splendidly led by their officers. Colonel Straubenzie drove the enemy out of their rifle-pits at the point of the bayonet, forced his way across the plain, and seized the houses in which the rebels had entrenched themselves. Middleton and his men bivouacked that night on the field of battle. In the heat of the action Riel sent another letter, saying that, if the general did not retreat or grant an interview, the prisoners would be killed. The letter came too late, the advance being already ordered; but Riel did not carry out his threat—perhaps never seriously intended it: Middleton carried the day, rescued the prisoners, and

remained master of the field, with a loss of five men (poor Tom Purnell among them) and fifteen wounded. The enemy sustained great loss.

Big Bear, with five hundred braves, was entrenched in a commanding position twelve miles north-east of Fort Pitt. Colonel Strange was told off to subdue the Indian chief, and had several encounters and some losses before he finally succeeded. But, on May 15th, Riel surrendered, and was sent, by order of Government, to Regina, a prisoner strongly guarded, to await trial in July.

Riel was not a fighting man; his heart was not hard enough. He was a generous being, of strong affections and deep piety. He loved his home, his wife, his children, his farm in Minnesota, and, afterwards, at Sun River Settlement, Montana, where he was for some time a teacher in an industrial school. He was brave, but when it came to shedding the blood of others, he could not bear it. It was he who had seconded and even urged Big Bear to offer mercy to McIntosh, and who had held in check the braves eager for the fray. His vacillation was shown in his repeated messages to General Middleton, threatening to retaliate on the prisoners, if the general did not retreat; whereas he could not bring himself to

carry out his threat, and the prisoners were rescued. And now he, too, was a prisoner, and his career as a leader, undertaken only from generosity and a sense of duty, was over.

Meanwhile, the white prisoners were at liberty to go to their homes. They parted after a thanksgiving service from the missionary clergyman; and, weak, wan, and sick (for cold and hunger had wrought keenly on them), each turned to the nearest friendly shelter he knew of.

One bright and welcoming day, when the prairie was full of bloom, and a thousand dainty-winged things hovered over its treasures, May stood at the door of the Red House, shading her eyes with her hand, and watching, watching for the twentieth time; for the poor pilgrims were expected, as to a haven of rest. Jim had written to beg Phil to put their shack in order, for the use of the McIntosh family. Maggie was dying; they could not travel far, and they were all worn out. Mr. and Mrs. Dent, when they heard of this, proposed, as a better plan, that the young men should go back to the shack, and the McIntosh family should come to the hospitable shelter of the Red House. They had been daily expected for a week past, and now Phil had gone in his waggon to meet

them and bring them on. As May stood there, clad in a neatly fitting dark-blue cotton and a white falling collar, her fresh young face alight with intense interest and some nameless new charm of expression, she looked, indeed, the fairest flower of the prairie. Annie came up and laid her golden head against her sister's arm, which instantly moved lovingly to encircle it.

She gave a start, but it was Annie who cried, "Here they come! I see them. Don't you see them, May?"

There was the curve of a waggon-tilt on the farthest visible ridge, and a dot which was a man's head; and then the ears and heads of the horses appeared; and, finally, there was no doubt—yes, it was the waggon. In half an hour it was close by. Phil drew up some thirty yards away from the house, and Jim jumped down and came running up to the door, where all the family, except the invalid mother, were assembled in welcome. His face was pale and worn, and his clothing was in a tattered state. After a hasty grasp of Mr. Dent's hand, and a hurried, "Thank you, sir," he turned to May, who stood now, in the composure of maiden dignity, with a kind welcoming smile on her lips. He took her hand in both his, saying, in

a low, earnest voice, "It is so good to see you again. You are well and happy, thank God." It was not like the calm, self-contained lad of old to burst out in this utterance; but his heart was too full to be silenced. May replied—

"How you must all have suffered! I am so sorry for you. And how is the poor girl?"

He shook his head, and Mr. McIntosh, here coming up, seized Mr. Dent's hand with deep feeling.

"It is truly Christian hospitality you are offering to us, sir," he said; "but I hear your wife is an invalid. Can she bear to have us here? Does she know that our poor Maggie will never leave the house alive?"

"Yes, yes, we know," answered Mr. Dent. "We only want to help you all. You have had enough to bear. Now let us go and help the ladies."

Phil, who had now left the horses in the charge of old Jock, assisted Mr. Dent to carry out a light sofa covered with blankets, which had been prepared for Maggie; and when she was placed on it, with the aid of her mother and Widow Barnlow, the sad little procession entered the house with the dull sense that Death was entering it too, a dread invisible presence.

May offered her hand respectfully to Mrs. McIntosh, saying, "My mother told me to bid you welcome for her. She hopes to see you soon."

And then she looked pityingly down on the pale face of Maggie, in which a certain beauty was now revealed, in the large eyes, the patient smile.

Jeanie, her pretty face piteously drawn in a weary hopelessness, and her blue eyes swimming in tears, looked up to the tall healthy May like a tired sad child. Seized by sudden pity, May threw her arms round her, and pressed a long firm kiss on her cheek.

"Do be comforted," she whispered. "We will do all we can to help *her*, and all of you." And hand in hand, they followed the rest into the house.

A large cool chamber had been devoted to the strangers, divided by a curtain into a space for the parents and one for the girls. Soft clean beds, fresh white curtains, and sunshine, made it seem a very chamber of peace to them, as they came to an end of their weary journey. There was no hurry, no noise. For the sake of the two sick women in the house, all was done as gently as

if there were no work but that of every day ; and the two good little well-trained girls fetched and carried, and did all they could to replace the widow, who was helping Mrs. McIntosh to make Maggie as easy as circumstances permitted. Phil and Jim went off at once to their shack, and so it was not till the next day that May and Jim met again.

It was in the same spot where he had told her of his intended departure. They met in the sunshine outside the Red House, and he led her gently, unconsciously to her, to that place. He had not spoken of her to Philip ; he could not bring himself to do so. As they walked, the two spoke of all the prisoners had endured.

"I cannot talk much to Jeanie," said May ; "it recalls such sad times, and she is so taken up with poor Maggie. How sweet it is to see those two sisters!—Jeanie, so pretty and yet so free from all thought of herself ; and Maggie, so good and patient, and looking for the better world as simply as a child at school looks for its holiday. Oh, I am glad they came here ! It will teach me so much ! And one sees how wonderfully God orders all things, even our trials ; for if that good clergyman and his wife had not been with them, even these dear people might have failed to learn

the lesson of consolation thoroughly. But oh, you have all suffered so much, so terribly! have you not? Tell me about it."

Jim looked at her with surprise, and with a feeling of reverent admiration mingled with his faithful love. He had always divined depths in May's soul beyond what had been shown to the world; but now the character seemed so surprisingly improved and opened out by a strange power of expression. He involuntarily thought how his good parents would admire her; and then a fresh pang came over him with the reflection that he and his were to be nothing to her in the future. He told her of their wanderings: of the days spent in marching through snow and rain; of nights spent in the horrible closeness of an Indian tent, or in the exposure of a bed dug out of the ground; of the rough and often too scanty fare; and at last of hunger, three days with no food for the men and hardly a little bread or pemmican for the women; but, through it all, of the kindness of the Indians and their poor gentle squaws, the fatherly courtesy of Big Bear, and the anxiety of Riel for the lives depending on him.

"At the battle of Batoche, when he feared the women would be fired on—both the Indian women

and ours—I never saw a man so harassed and driven. His eyes shone as if there was a light behind them, with his intense feeling. He showed us men the message he had written for General Middleton, threatening to kill the prisoners if the women and children were massacred; and he told us he could never do it, but he must make the threat to save the women. I was by when he had the General's answer, telling him to indicate the place where he had put the women, and they should not be fired on. And I shall never forget the long-drawn breath with which he said, 'Thank God!'

"He must be a good man," said May.

"He is. All he has done has been for others, the half-castes he feels bound up with by the accident of birth. He had nothing to gain, and all to lose."

"I trust the Government will be merciful to him."

"We all hope they may; but McIntosh has little hope."

May gave a long sigh. "Oh! what it must have been to you all! It must have made you years older in these few months. And I see it has; you are very much changed. I can never forgive myself; can *you* forgive me, Jim?" added

she suddenly, with a generous impulse of penitence, turning to him with eyes that spoke.

They were now at the place whither he had been leading her, and the very spot perhaps recalled his declaration that he should go to the war for her sake, and added to her emotion. She had often longed to tell him how sorry she was, but had never hoped she should be able to do so.

He turned to her with a very kind look, and said—

"Never think of that, dear. Things are ordered for us, and though I have not had the honour of striking a blow, much less of dying a soldier's death, like our poor, brave Tom, I have learned much, as you say, in this time. And if I had suffered far more, I should not care, for my own part, if it has helped to make you happy. I was an obstacle in your way, and I wanted to go. Tell me, May, are you happy?"

He looked so earnest, and so pale, and so miserable, though he tried bravely not to be, that she could not forbear a coquettish glance up at him under her lashes, and a faint smile about the corners of her pretty mouth, as she said, after some moments—

"I am glad to see you safe back!"

"But that is not what I mean; you know it is not. Don't play with me, May. I want to know if you and Phil understand each other now, and if all is as you wish. I *could* not ask him; but I ask you to tell me if I may wish you joy."

She glanced at him once more, and then in pity replied honestly—

"No, Jim, you may not. Phil and I had no need to understand one another; we are good friends, and no more. You made a little mistake."

"I made a mistake, May? Don't deceive me. Were not you mistaken, too?"

"Well, perhaps I was. Phil is a very nice boy, and—— There, don't be hard on me. I said I was sorry. Jim, let me go."

Tears of misery were running down her cheeks, and she turned to go away. But she did not go, for Jim understood the case at last,—a ray of sunshine seemed to pierce and warm his heart; and before May returned to the house, she had been made to confess to the truth, learned by experience, that "absence makes the heart grow fonder."

It was a very happy Jim who led to the Red

House a shy and blushing May. She went up at once to her mother, while McIntosh, who met them, said with *pawkie* Scot's humour—

"The air suits ye fine here, Jim, my lad; it's the medicine called the Prairie Flower, I guess."





CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE BIRDS FLEW HOMEWARDS.

"If mercy be a precept of Thy Will,
Return that mercy on Thy servant's head."

DRYDEN.

IT was not long before poor Maggie's sufferings were ended by a painless death. She was laid in a little cemetery redeemed from the prairie and fenced around with care. This cemetery was a gift prepared by Mr. Dent for the scattered inhabitants of the district, and Mr. McIntosh declared his intention of helping to put up a chapel there; a church it could not be called, for it was to be but a little square erection, to be used at need, or when a clergyman should come, as happened now and again.

One bright evening, Phil Hart and Jeanie

McIntosh were standing by the low mound which covered all that remained of poor Maggie. It was turfed, and a white rose tree had been planted on it, and already bore a few buds. At the head of the mound was an oaken cross, with these words clearly, though somewhat rudely, carved—

MARGARET MCINTOSH,

DIED JUNE 16, 1885;

AGED 22 YEARS.

They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.—DANIEL xii. 3.

Phil was still holding a knife with which he had been retouching the letters, for he had incised the inscription. Jeanie stood by, with her hands loosely clasped in front of her, and tears slowly gathering in her eyes.

"The world seems strange to me, without my sister," she said.

"You were always together, were you not?" asked Phil, gently.

"Yes; we were brought up together in our bonny Scotch home, and we came to these cold countries together, and we have seen joy and sorrow always hand in hand."

"You were the heroines of Fort Pitt. Every

one in the length and breadth of the land knows how brave you were."

"I am glad they know how brave poor Maggie was. Father chose the text well ; she was *wise* though she was young, and I am sure her name will shine brightly in our remembrance. I hope she may be a little star in the Lord's crown above."

"She was a heroine ; that's what she was," said Philip.

"And oh, so gentle and sweet at home !" cried Jeanie, clasping her hands tighter, and turning away, as if the sight of the mound and cross was too much for her to bear.

Phil was putting up his knife and the other things he had brought, and he now turned to walk home by her side to the Red House, which showed half a mile away, above a fold of the prairie.

After they had gone a few steps in silence, Jeanie said—

"It will be a good home-going for May, when they go to England. I hope the doctors there will cure Mrs. Dent. And Jim's going with them, do ye know?"

"Indeed I do ; he told me last night. I shall

be lonely enough next winter," said Phil, heaving up a big sigh.

"Yes, it will be hard for ye," said bonny Jeanie, turning on him a look of soft and deep sympathy. For it was Jeanie's conviction that Phil was broken-hearted on account of May's change of mind, since she had heard much from Jim in moments of confidence concerning May's attachment to Phil, in which, as we know, he firmly believed. "And we shall be going to Scotland, and leaving my poor Maggie all alone. But you will see to her grave by times, Mr. Phil, won't ye?"

A sudden inspiration came to Phil. He turned his dark eyes on the pretty pleading blue ones, and said—

"Stay and do it yourself, Jeanie. Stay as my wife, and make it less lonely for me."

She started and blushed. "Me, Mr. Phil? Oh, no; ye can't mean it! Your heart is gone to May, and I cannot be second."

"No, Jeanie, it is not so. You are first, indeed. I liked and admired May as a sister, and we were good friends. But it was Jim she really cared for all the time in the deep of her heart, though we laughed and joked together. I saw it long ago; and, oh Jeanie——"

Somehow, there was not much more said ; but the end of it all was, that when the Dents went to England for the skilled medical advice which soothed Mrs. Dent's sufferings and restored as much of health as was possible to her,—and when Jim went with them to introduce his promised bride to his parents,—Phil and Jeanie, as man and wife, remained in the Red House by the Rockies.

Often and often in winter evenings, by the cosy fire, they talked of the sad weary wanderings the English prisoners had undergone. But Jeanie had always a good word for Riel. He was tried on July 17, 1885, found guilty, but recommended to mercy. The pretext of partial insanity was raised in order to save his life, and indeed there seems to have been at times a terrible excitement in the man, since, in the rising of 1870, he caused a prisoner named Scott to be unjustly executed. Remorse for this act preyed on his mind, and he would cry out, "Blood! We must have blood!" with eyes in which men saw a strange, sad fire. But the plea was not allowed, and he was hanged as a traitor and revolutionary leader. Perhaps the execution was a necessity, though a sad and stern one, for peace was restored among the half-breeds, and no further struggle has arisen. Thus one man's death

may have saved many lives. And if so, it is what Riel would have chosen ; for he took his life in his hand when he followed those who called him from his quiet home to lead them and redress their grievances. Government needs stern measures at times, but we may yet feel a glow of pity and admiration for those who, even in error, arise at the call of their race or land, and give themselves up for others. And we may hope that Louis Riel found mercy at the Highest Tribunal of all.

* * * * *

Such is the short, sad story of the last rising of the Indians in the North-West, and of a few colonists who were by circumstances drawn into it.

THE END.

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